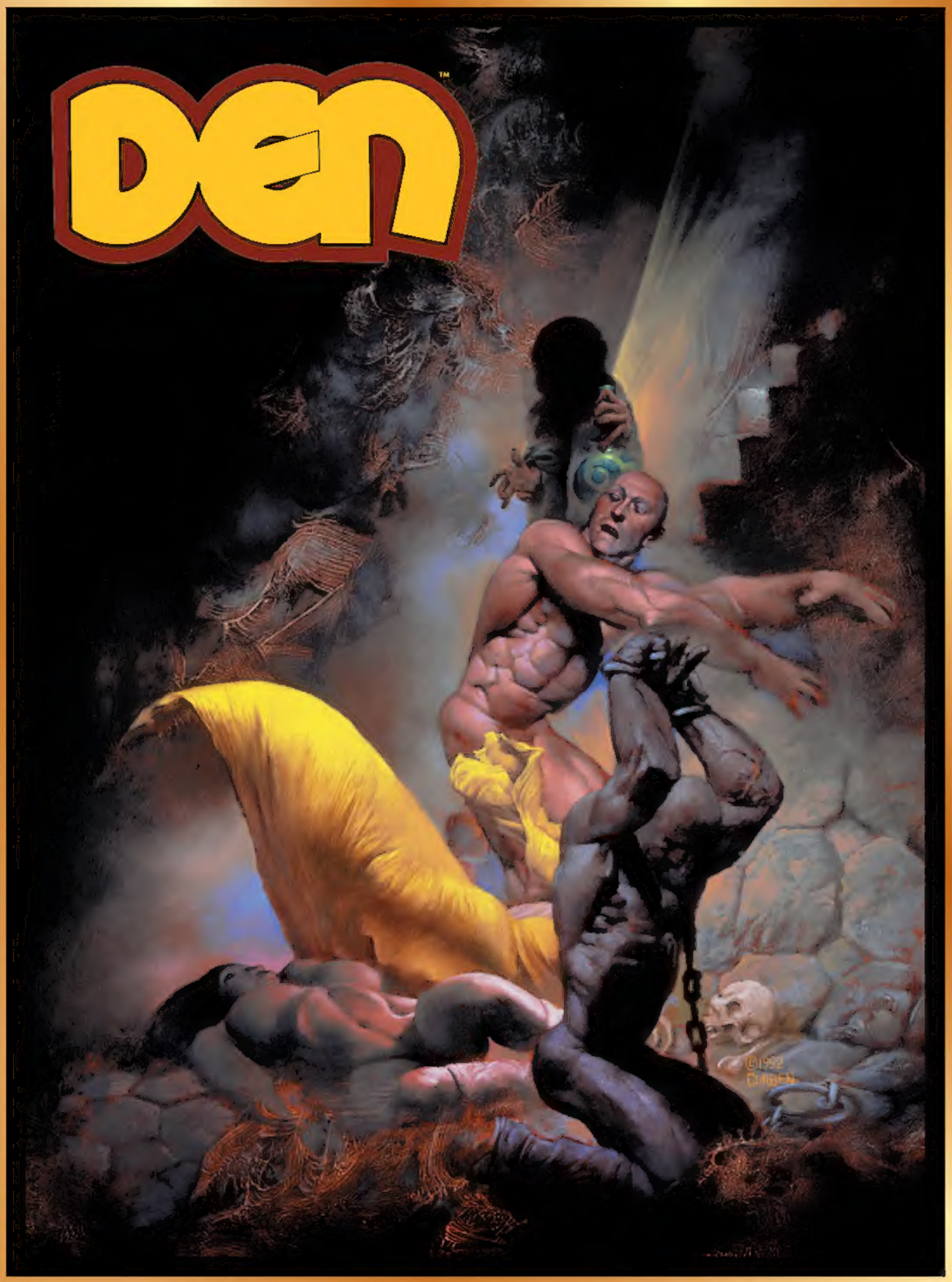

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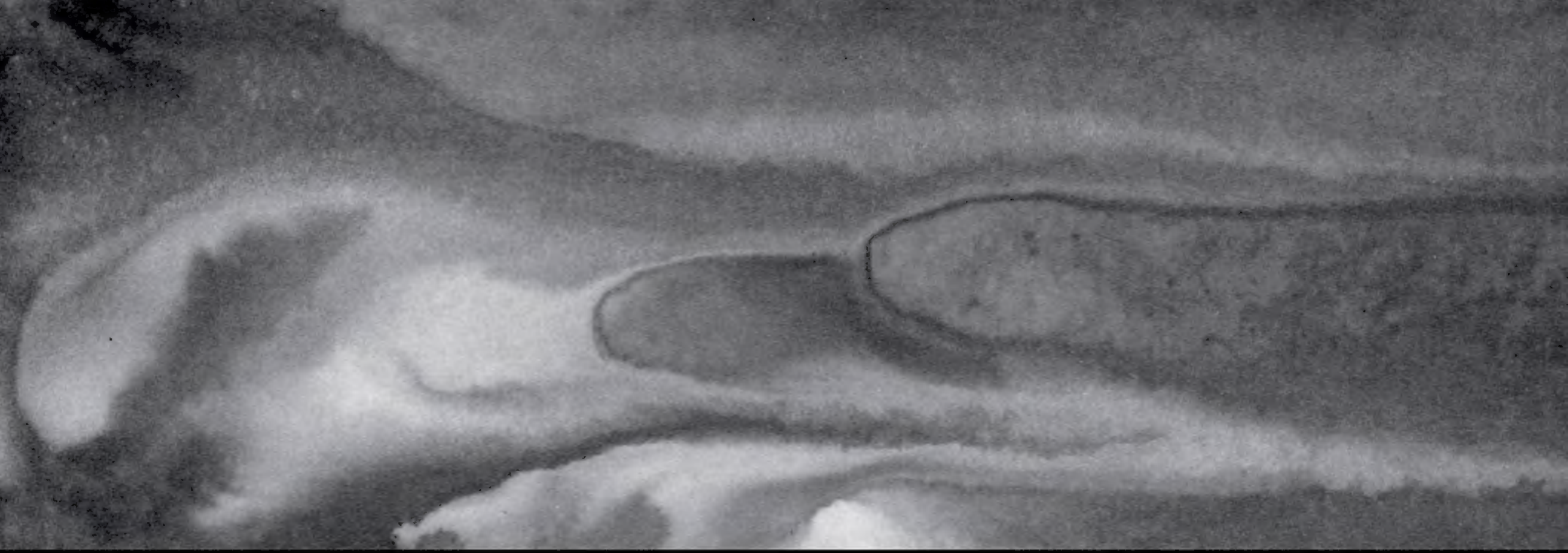

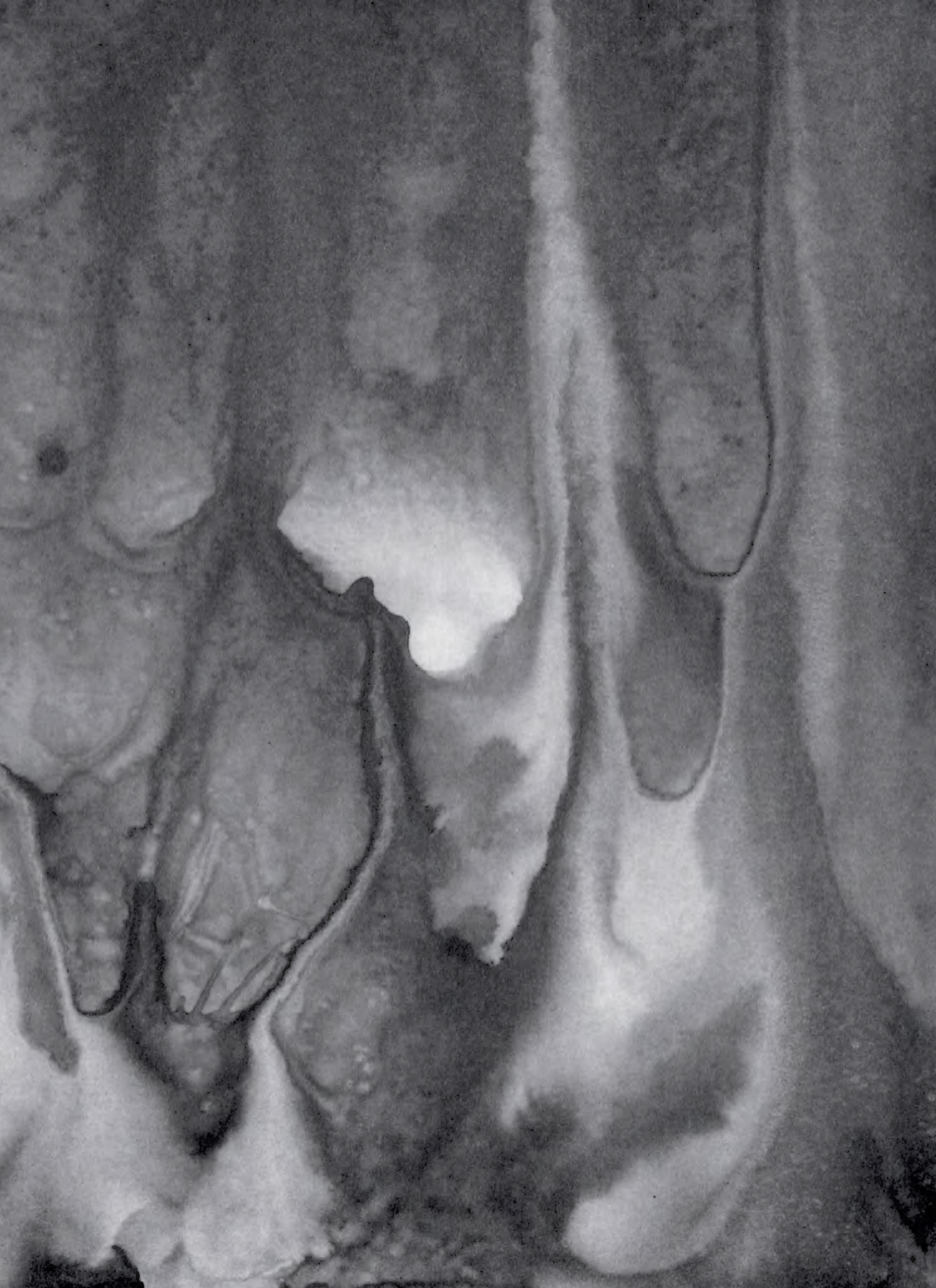

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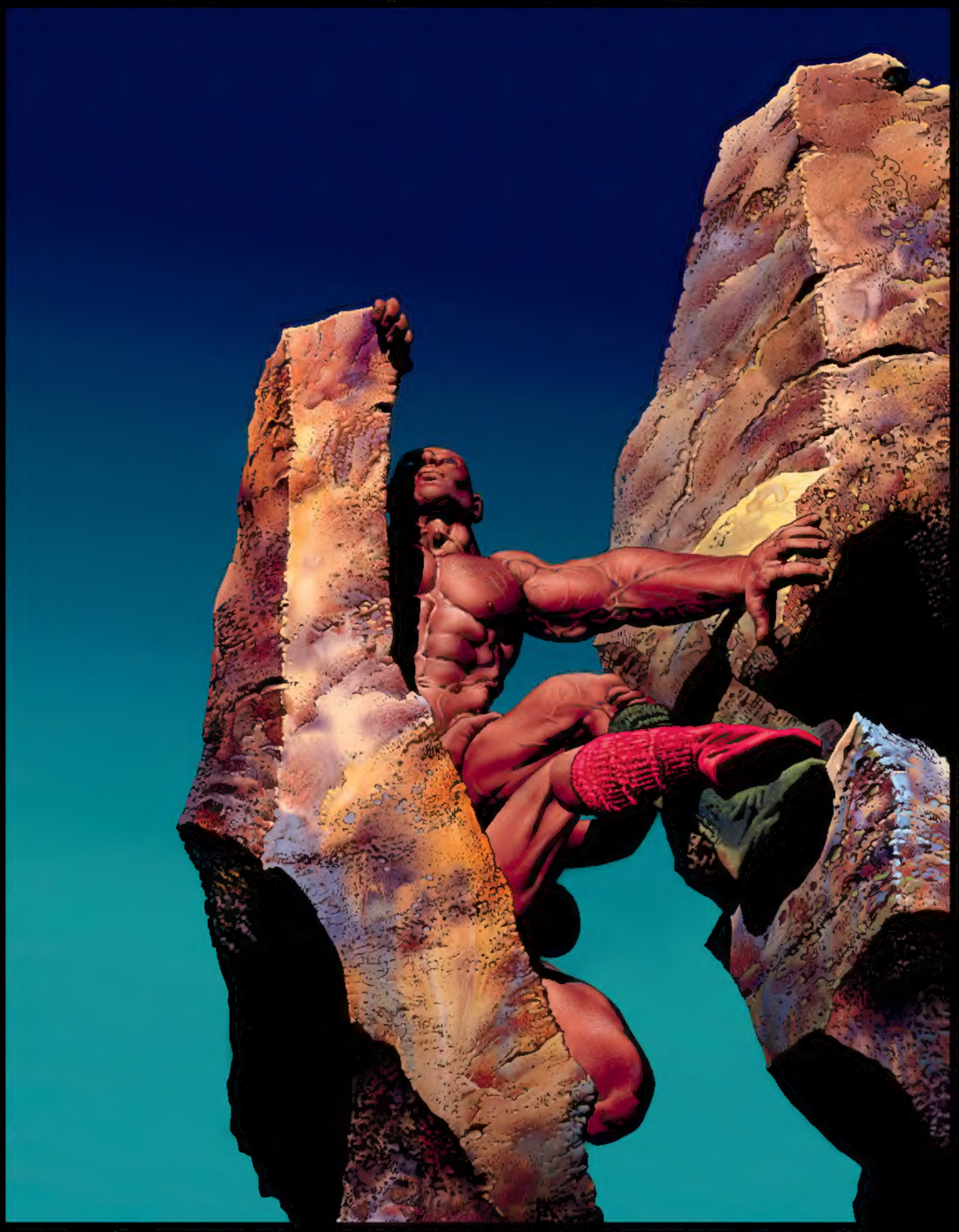

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Den™

VOLUME 5

THE PRICE OF MEMORIES

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DEN VOLUME 5: THE PRICE OF MEMORIES

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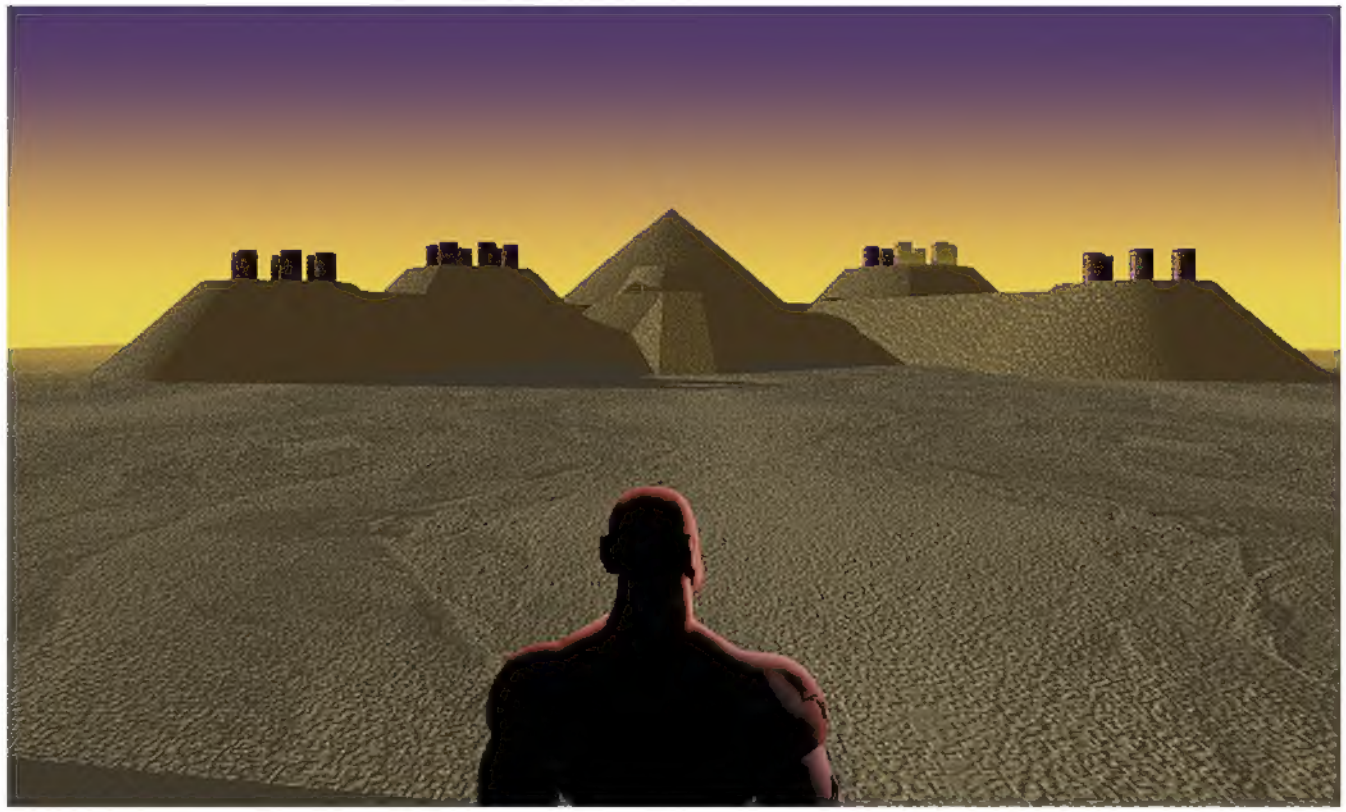
FOREWORD

CHRISTOS GAGE



Ready for the most obnoxious opening of a foreword ever?

I was at work in the writers' room of the *Daredevil* TV show when I heard Richard Corben had sent me an original page from the story we did together.

That makes me sound like a name-dropping Hollywood player who hangs out with cool people and does awesome things, right? I'm not, which is why I couldn't resist typing it. But it is, technically, true. When I was writing the *Buffy* comic for Dark Horse, I persuaded my editor to convince Richard Corben, a personal idol, to draw three pages. Pushing my luck further, I emailed Mr. Corben to ask if I could buy an original. He wrote back a nice note saying, "I'll send you one," which I didn't expect would actually happen . . . until my wife and writing partner, Ruth, who was home sick that day, texted to say I'd received a package from Corben Studios, and was nonplussed by my subsequent freakout. When I got home, I opened it to find the best page of the three, a gift from the artist. No notice that it was coming. No need for thanks—the response to my effusive thank-you email was a cordial "You're welcome, it was fun" (paraphrasing: like an idiot, I forgot to print the emails before they vanished). I never got to meet him in person, but from our brief interaction, I learned that's who Richard Corben was: an incredibly nice genius, quiet and unassuming despite having the powers of a god.

Unlike many who encountered his work in underground comix or *Heavy Metal*, my first exposure to Corben was *Rip in Time*, in 1986. I'd always been a sucker for dinosaurs, and my top dinosaur artist was Gil Kane . . . until *Rip in Time*, when it became a tie. I was now hooked on Corben and commenced looking for more.

I soon realized I actually had seen his art before . . . on the covers of the first seven US releases of the British *Fighting Fantasy* books.

These were role-playing paperbacks where you rolled dice and turned to different sections depending on the result. I'd been pulled in by Corben's cover paintings starting in 1983. Not long after that I figured out I'd seen his work even before *that* . . . yep, Meat Loaf's *Bat out of Hell* album. Is that why his art seemed like nothing I'd ever laid eyes on yet also like a window into a world part of me always sensed was out there? Or is that just how genius works?

Either way, there was no going back. I had to have everything Corben. (I'm not quite there, but close.) Den is his magnum opus. This volume collects *DenSaga*, which I remember buying when it came out (and has a pretty sweet dinosaur in it). Herein we see Corben continue the world building he'd begun in earnest with *Children of Fire.* While I never got the impression it was important to him to meticulously document every moment of Den's life (any of the Dens), he obviously had a mythology in mind, aspects of which he would explore as creative impulses moved him. If you're looking for a tidy summary of the lives of Den, Kath, the Red Queen, and their associates, try Wikipedia. But that's not what it's ever been about.

The wonderful thing about *DenSaga* is that Corben finally seemed to have found a format that worked for him. The magazine size it appeared in (very close to the size of this volume) was a far better presentation than the standard US comic book. While I lack even a fraction of the understanding of art or color possessed by José Villarrubia, the master who is overseeing the art direction of Corben's library with help from Dona Corben and Beth Corben Reed, it seems to me that the paper quality of the original *Den Saga* reproduced Corben's elaborate, meticulous coloring better than previous formats.

And while it's Corben's art that has rightfully placed him on the Mount Rushmore of comics and fantasy creators, as a writer I can't ignore some of the truly impactful moments in this story. When Cotwun has to confirm with his own eyes the fate of his mate, it's not a surprise—nor is it intended to be—but would it hit any harder if it was? I can't imagine how. And once again we see perhaps my favorite thing about Corben's character work when folks we encounter as villains elsewhere (sometimes in the same story) are heroes here, and vice versa. Look, Kil's complicated, okay? You just don't understand her like I do. Seriously, though, Corben manages this with a deftness I've only seen in places like *The Sopranos* or *Game of Thrones.*

Anyway, you didn't buy this book for my analysis, such as it is. You bought it for Corben. So dig in like it's one of Zeg's sweetlins. It's every bit as addictive.

Christos Gage
2/24/2024

THE PRICE OF MEMORIES

A MOX-DRAWN CART MOVES SLOWLY SOUTHWARD THROUGH LOWER DORMILON. WEARY TRAVELERS TREAD THE LONELY, NEARLY INVISIBLE PATH APPROACHING THE GRASSLANDS OF ZEGLON. BUT THAT IS SEVERAL DAYS OF ENDLESS SAND AND BARREN GRAVEL AWAY. THEY HAD SEEN ONLY A SCATTERING OF THE WILD BOAR HERDS SAID TO INFEST DORMILON, AND IT IS UNUSUALLY WARM FOR AUTUMN.

THAT DAMNED FLYER! WE COULD HAVE BEEN SAFE AT HOME BY NOW IF IT HADN'T STALLED.

IT'S PEACEFUL AND QUIET HERE. ***TOO*** QUIET FOR ME. I MISS OUR FOREST ANIMALS AND BIRDS.

I COULD HAVE FIXED IT IF I HAD THE PARTS AND TOOLS. THAT TRADER THOUGHT ***HE*** COULD. HOW'S OUR BOY DOING?

NOT A WORD. NOTHING SINCE SCON'S ERUPTION.

WAIT! HIS EYES ARE FLICKERING OPEN.

EH?

PA, HE'S AWAKE.

OH! STOP! BE QUIET!

LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR IT?

WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT? LOOK AT HIM!

THERE! THAT SOUND. WHAT IS IT?

CALM DOWN, DEN! THERE'S NOTHING.

DEN, LIE BACK. IT'S OKAY.

THAT SOUND. IT MEANS SOMETHING-- WHAT?

OUT OF MY WAY!

NO! THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE.

IT'S FADING AWAY.

JUST THE REMNANTS OF A DREAM, DEN. WE'LL CAMP HERE IF IT'LL CALM YOU.

WYN, HOW IS HE?

STILL STARING OFF INTO THE DESERT.

--LIKE HE'S STILL LISTENING.

AT LEAST HIS APPETITE IS IMPROVING.

WE SHOULDN'T HAVE STOPPED HERE. THERE WERE SOME SURLY TYPES WATCHING US IN THAT SETTLEMENT. I HOPE THEY DIDN'T FOLLOW US.

HIYA, FOLKS. MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

I'M JUST A POOR TRAVELER LIKE YOU. MY NAME'S BUTO.

YOUR COMPANION IS A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE.

LIKE HELL! YOU'VE BEEN OUR SHADOW SINCE WE LEFT WAXOG.

NONSENSE! THIS FELLOW IS MY PAL. LOOKS LIKE HE'S NOT ALL HE USED TO BE THOUGH. BUT WE STILL HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE.

SLAP! SLAP! SLAP!

YOU'VE HAD IT, ***TURD!***

DON'T MAKE MY BOYS NERVOUS, MR. COLBALT. THEY MIGHT BLOW YOUR SWEETIE'S ***BRAINS*** OUT.

GIVE ME THAT! THERE! I WONDER IF YOU'D FETCH A PRICE ON THE SLAVE MARKET?

FATHER!

I KNOW YOU WILL, HONEY!

I WOULDN'T LOWER MYSELF TO TOUCHING A SCUMMY BLUE--UNLESS YOU KNOW SOME REAL GOOD TRICKS. HOW ABOUT IT, HONEY?

DIE!

HAUGH!

KRAK!

YOU'RE THE ONE I REALLY WANT.

REMEMBER THIS?

MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE.

THUD

NOW TO TAKE THE FABLED PRIZE.

BE QUIET!

HA, HA, HA! IS THAT HOW YOU BEG, DEN?

SHUT UP AND LISTEN, YOU FOOL!

OKAY, MAKE IT TOUGH ON YOURSELF.

I KNOW THAT SOUND! WHAT--?

KRAK!

THE HUGE MAN JUMPS AS IF STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, HIS HEAD WOBBLING LOOSELY AND SPRAYING A STREAM OF BLOOD AND SPITTLE.

KBLUVKK

BUTO'S THUGS SEEM STUNNED--

--MOMENTARILY.

BLAM!

TAKA TAKA TAKA

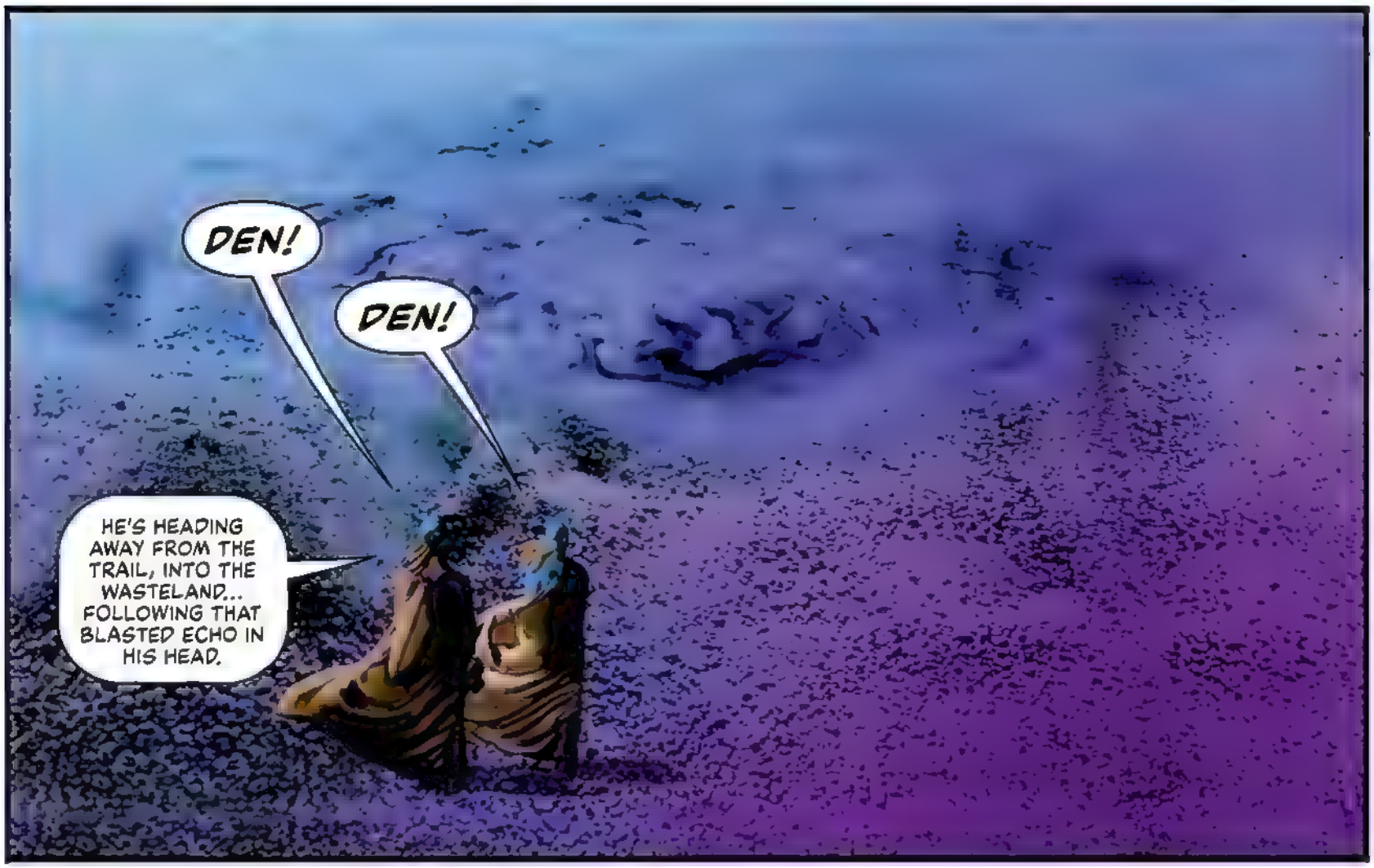
KNTCH!

SKRAK

BUT THEY FORGOT TO KEEP TRACK OF THE BLUES.

WHERE'S DEN?
GONE! THERE'S A GAP BETWEEN THE ROCKS.

HE HEARD THE SOUND AGAIN.
HE MUST HAVE SLIPPED THROUGH HERE.


DEN!
DEN!
HE'S HEADING AWAY FROM THE TRAIL, INTO THE WASTELAND... FOLLOWING THAT BLASTED ECHO IN HIS HEAD.

THE TRACKS ARE EASY TO FOLLOW.

THE WIND IS BLOWING THEM AWAY.

IF WE HURRY, WE MIGHT CATCH HIM.

WHAT'S THAT AHEAD?

MORE TRACKS! SOME LARGE CREATURE. IS THIS WHAT HE HEARD?

HE STOPPED HERE THEN RAN ON.

DEN!

NO USE. THE TRACKS ARE GONE.

WE'LL HAVE TO RETURN TO THE CAMP AND TRY AGAIN TOMORROW.

DAWN. THE MAN PAUSES, STARING AT THE EDIFICE BEFORE HIM. HE HAS RUN ALL NIGHT, HAUNTED BY A FAINTLY AUDIBLE TICKLING. A CONNECTION TO HIS CLOUDED PAST.

THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR HIM WITHOUT AN UNDERSTANDING OF HIS ORIGIN.

HE MUST FIND THAT UNDERSTANDING, PERHAPS HERE. HE RUNS FORWARD.

THEN, WITHIN A SHADOWED ENCLOSURE, HE FREEZES.

CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA

CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING

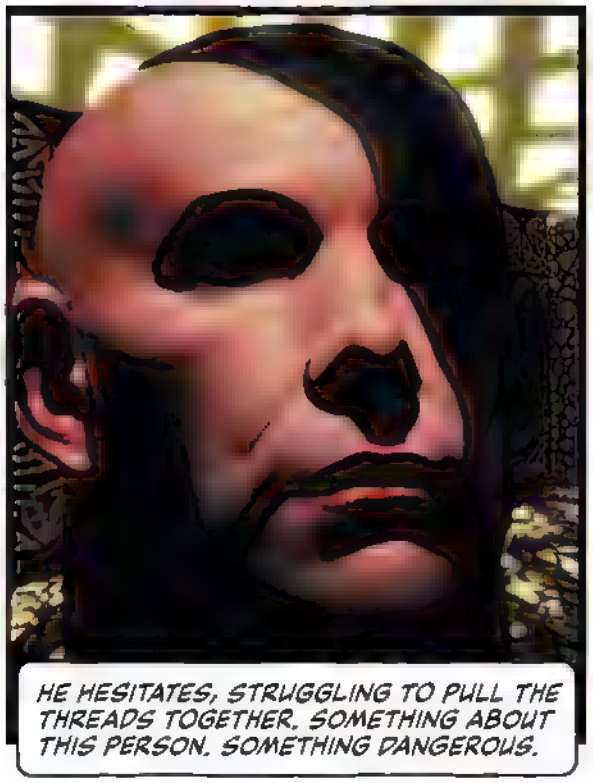
CHING CHA CHING CHA CHI

CHA CHING

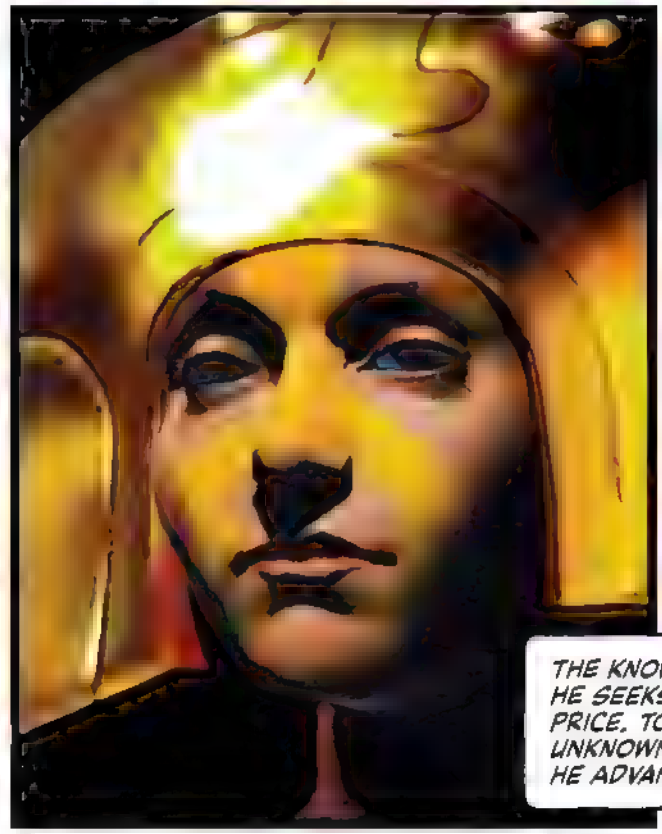
THE SOUND STOPS.

A STRANGE BUT FAMILIAR FIGURE WEARING SMALL BELLS ON HER BOOTS WAITS NEAR A PLANK.

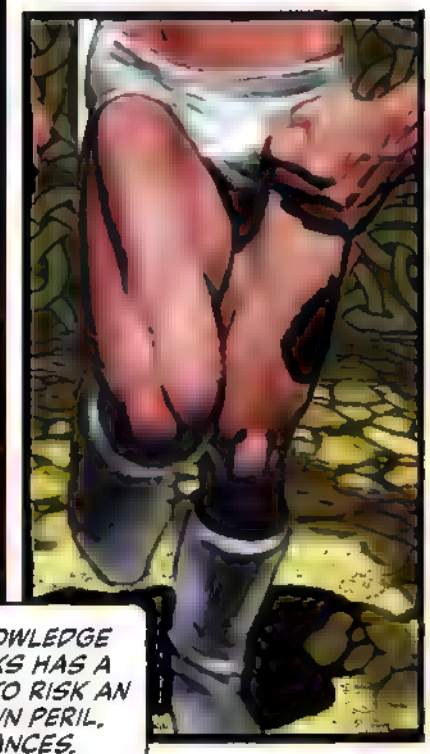
TANTALIZINGLY, SHE SEEMS TO BECKON HIM.



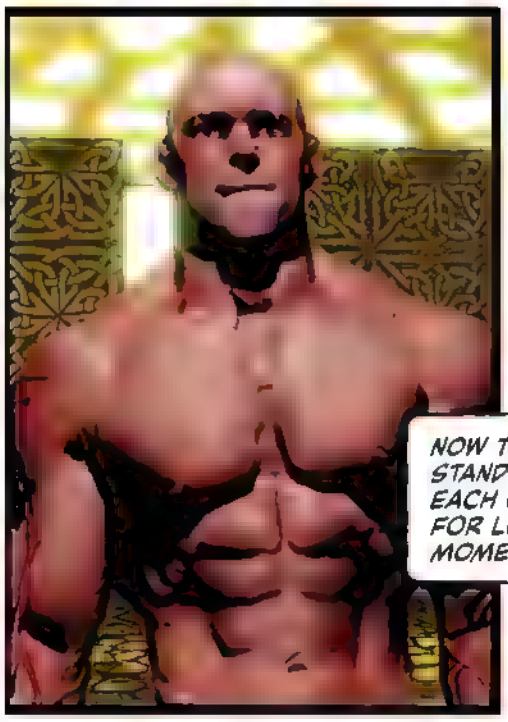
HE HESITATES, STRUGGLING TO PULL THE THREADS TOGETHER. SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PERSON. SOMETHING DANGEROUS.



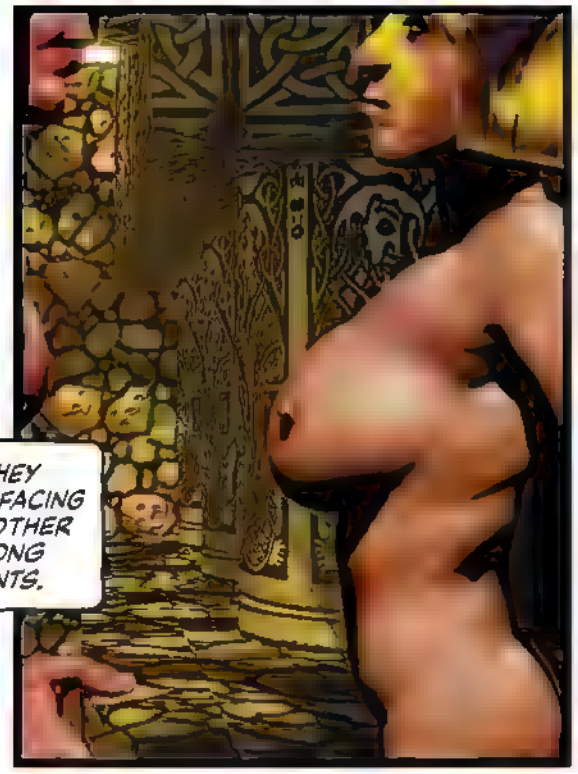
THE KNOWLEDGE HE SEEKS HAS A PRICE. TO RISK AN UNKNOWN PERIL, HE ADVANCES.



FROM BELOW THE AURA OF CHEWED BONES, A CHILLING FEAR GRIPS HIS SPINE. AN OVERPOWERING URGE TO TURN AND FLEE. YET HE CONTINUES TOWARD THE GOAL.



NOW THEY STAND FACING EACH OTHER FOR LONG MOMENTS.



EVER CLOSER HIS EYES SEARCH AND QUESTION. A SHADOW MOVES.

IT RISES HIGHER, EVER HIGHER, THEN LEANS DOWN. THE INDIAN GIRL'S DEADLY PARTNER. DEN REMEMBERS HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER IN DISTANT NEVERWHERE AS THE SMILING HEAD GROWS EVER LARGER.

TOO LATE! GAPING JAWS ENCLOSE THE WELL-MUSCLED MEAL.

HOT--

WET--

AND THE DARKNESS-- OF BLACK OBLIVION.

FLOATING NOTHINGNESS.

AFTER AN ETERNITY, A LUMINOUS INTRUSION...

A SWEET SMELL OF WHOLESOME FOOD...

A WARM, WET SCRUBBING SENSATION...

AND ANOTHER PRESENCE.

THE WOMAN CONTINUES HER WORK IN SILENCE. DEN SAYS NOTHING AND WATCHES.

AFTER AN HOUR SHE SERVES THE FOOD. NO SOUND BREAKS THE GROWING TENSION, THICK AND PALPABLE.

FINALLY--

:COUGH!: ER-- WHO ARE YOU?

CHACHING-CHACHING CHAC

KER-LANK TERKLE

HE'S AT THE DOOR INSTANTLY. THE SIGHT STOPS HIM.

THE WOMAN RECLINES ON HER HUGE BLUE MONSTER. ITS GLOWING EYES GLARE BACK AT DEN WITH PRIMEVAL COVETING, A HUNGER ONCE THWARTED, NOW PERCOLATING, WAITING FOR ITS CHANCE.

THE MAN BACKS AWAY SLOWLY. AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES, HE MUTTERS.

DAMN LIZARD!

I WONDER IF I CAN ESCAPE--

...WAIT A MINUTE.

I DIDN'T COME ALL THIS DISTANCE JUST TO TRY TO ESCAPE.

BUT WHEN THE TIME COMES--

CHA CHING CHA CHI

CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
CHA CHING
OH, STRANGE BROWN PRINCESS. I HAVE COME FAR TO ASK YOU QUESTIONS. PLEASE TELL ME--
DO YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS I SEEK?
I DANCE FOR YOU MY DANCE OF LOVE.
GIVE ME!

WHAT? MY LOVE IS NOT TRIVIAL NOR GIVEN FOR THE ASKING.

I WANT; YOU GIVE

WAIT, I CAN HELP YOU IN OTHER WAYS IF YOU'LL ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.

HOW CAN YOU HELP ME?

YOUR FRIEND NEEDS FOOD. I CAN BRING THREE BODIES FOR HIM.

HE, HE, HE!

PHTHALO NEEDS NO HELP TO FIND MEAT.

BUT YES, I CAN MAKE YOU SEE VISIONS OF YOUR PAST IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.

PLEASE! MY MIND IS LOST.

THERE IS A PRICE.

AND IF YOU FAIL, PHTHALO WILL HAVE YOU.

?

CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY-CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY-CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY...CHINGY...CHIN

OOOOOO- AAAAAWWGHHHHH

GRROUWPK!

VERY WELL, DEN. THAT'S ONE. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

TELL ME...TELL ME...

"DEN, I PICK UP MANY STRANGE AND UNUSUAL VIBRATIONS FROM YOU AND THERE IS AN AURA OF VIOLENCE AND HORROR. IT IS HARD TO VISUALIZE THE TRUE EVENTS. I'LL TRY TO DESCRIBE THE FRAGMENTED SCENES I SEE. MAYBE SOME LOGIC WILL PRESENT ITSELF."

"I HOPE SO."

"BACK, BACK TO THE VERY FIRST SENSATION--FROM A COLD BLACK SLEEPING OBLIVION, A FLASH OF BLOODY LIGHT.

"AND THE SURGE OF CASCADING SENSATIONS, FALLING THROUGH A BUBBLING FLUID.

"THEN A THUNDEROUS SOUND AND THE PAIN OF FIERY HEAT. LIVING CELLS ARE BURNED BUT CAN'T SCREAM."

"THE PROTO-LIFE LIFE FLOATS IN ANOTHER LIQUID WITH ITS BROTHERS.

"THE IMAGES BLUR--WAIT, AN EMERGENCE IN THE MIDST OF SHRIEKING NOISE AND CARNAGE. FIVE SACRIFICES EXIT AT THE NATIVITY.

SKADSH! THROKCH! TWAUGH BRAT TAT

"THE RED PRIESTESS WELCOMES LITTLE DEN AND SUCKLES HIM ON ERADIATED BLOOD AND MILK.

"THE MAMMARY FIXATION IS ESTABLISHED FROM THE BEGINNING.

"A JARRING FALL...

"AND A FRIGHTENING VISAGE.

"ANOTHER GESTURES MYSTERIOUSLY.

"AMONG THE CLOUDS, LITTLE DEN SPENDS HIS YOUTH. HERE THEY CALL HIM *DAVID.*

"HE GROWS FAST ON PUCCA'S NOURISHMENT.

"DIFFERENT THAN HIS PLAYMATES, BOLDER, FASTER AND STRONGER. HE LEADS A PROTECTED LIFE WITH THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN'S KINDERGARTEN.

"AND HIS SISTER *ELINORMA.*"

TWEEET

WHAT THAT?

BAD!

"A LIGHTNING ATTACK FROM THE OPAQUE CLOUDS. A FLOCK OF DREADED SCORTURES SEARCHING FOR AN EASY MEAL.

"A BITE-SIZE SNACK."

RUN!

ARRRGH!

EH?

PARTY TIME.

SLIK CLIK

TSCAT AT AT AT AT

TSCAT AT AT AT

WAAAH!

DAMN YOU! LET IT GO!

"THE SCORTURES BREAK OFF."

HELL! ZEG'LL BE PISSED IF HE FINDS OUT ABOUT THIS. GOOD THING HE'S STILL GONE.

I'M BACK, TAUG, AND YOU WELCOME ME WITH SUCH LANGUAGE.

OOPS.

ANOTHER SCORT RAID! YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO KEEP THEM OFF BY MYSELF! MURK WENT TO ZETON FOR SUPPLIES, AND YOU KNOW THE BULL ANGELS ARE WORTHLESS WITH FIREARMS.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES!

OH, NO, THIS IS PITIFUL...

SCON, IS THAT LITTLE CHERUB DEAD?

NEARLY, FATHER.

TAKE IT TO THE TOWER.

INNOCENT LIVES LOST! AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS WHINE.

WHAT'S THIS? WHY IS THIS ANGEL... ***NAKED?***

I THOUGHT IF I LET THEM GO NAKED, IT'D ENCOURAGE MORE MATING.

THIS MUST ***STOP!*** THEY CAN MATE WITH CLOTHES ***ON.***

OH, THIS IS THE ***WORST.***

THE PLACE IS OVERGROWN WITH ***IMPURE,*** TANGLED ***WEEDS.*** I TOLD YOU I WANTED TO SEE ONLY WHITE WHEN I RETURNED.

I'M TELLING YOU, ZEG, IF WE KEEP THEM UNDER CONTROL WITH THE SEDATIVES, THEY CAN'T DO DANGEROUS WORK. TWO BULLS ***FELL*** LAST WEEK TRYING TO CLEAR IT AWAY.

"MILES AWAY, TWO CHARACTERS WHO WILL INFLUENCE LITTLE DAVID'S FUTURE ARE CONSPIRING."

"IS IT MY UNCLE DAN?"

"POSSIBLY, ALTHOUGH HIS COMPANION CALLS HIM BY ANOTHER NAME."

"FAMILIAR CHARACTERS, DIFFERENT NAMES."

KTHUMPCH!

OOFF!

OWH!

BETTER, MAL, BUT YOU'VE STILL MUCH TO LEARN.

NOW WE TEACH EACH OTHER.

KIL, WE MUST CONCENTRATE ON PLANNING THE RESCUE MISSION. IT'S BEEN OVER A YEAR. PUCCA MIGHT GIVE UP HOPE.

THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER.

PRETEND I'M PUCCA.

THAT MEANT NOTHING. AN IMBALANCE OF HORMONES CAUSED BY DIET. AND YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE PUCCA.

WE'D BETTER USE THOSE HORMONES UP.

WE'VE BEEN EATING TOO MUCH MEAT.

MORE MEAT.

I PROMISED TO HELP YOU, AND I WILL, BUT YOU SHOULD STAY WITH ME. WE BELONG TOGETHER TO COMFORT EACH OTHER IN THIS STRANGE LAND.

I HAVE PLEDGED MYSELF TO PUCCA. YOU AND I ARE OF THE SAME RACE, BUT WE'RE REALLY STRANGERS ONLY BROUGHT TOGETHER BY CHANCE.

SOMETHING IN THIS WORLD HAS CHANGED ME AND I NEED YOU, MAL... DESPERATELY.

SHE NEEDS ME.

I *SAVED* YOU.

AND I SAVED *YOU.*

OKAY. I'LL SHARE YOU WITH PUCCA, BUT SHE MUST KEEP YOU WELL FED...WITH *MEAT.*

IT'S WONDERFUL, MAL. IT CAN'T BE ANY BETTER THAN THIS...BACK ON THE OTHER WORLD, I WAS BRED AS A WARRIOR. THAT SEEMS SO UNIMPORTANT AND FAR AWAY.

MMM. I'M HAPPIER NOW THAN I'VE EVER BEEN.

MAL!

GONE! YOU WOULD LEAVE ME! *DAMN* YOU! WE COULD HAVE BEEN...

SSSS

SSSKRAKAK BRUMB!

YOUR SKILLS AT STEALTH BECAME MORE ADVANCED THAN YOU LET ON. BUT IF YOU THINK YOU'RE RID OF ME, YOU'RE IN FOR A SURPRISE.

MY HEAD--THE PAIN RETURNS.

"IS THIS ME, OR MY UNCLE DAN?"

"IT IS MAL."

SKREEE SKREEE!

THAT NOISE. SOMETHING SCREECHING IN PAIN.

HMM, SOME KIND OF WINGED CHICKEN.

WHAT MAKES HIM FLIP AND FLOP LIKE THAT?

CAUGHT BY A HARNESS STRAP. APPARENTLY DOMESTICATED AND TRAINED AS A FLYING MOUNT. BUT WHERE'S THE RIDER?

MORE IMPORTANT. IS HE GOOD TO EAT?

JUST KIDDING!

CRACK!

ATTA BOY! SAVOR YOUR FREEDOM LIKE I DO.

FREEDOM, MAL? FROM ME?

YOU MUST HAVE AWOKE AND RISEN EARLY. YOU DIDN'T WISH TO DISTURB ME. BUT I FELT THE ABSENCE AND COULDN'T REST.

WE'RE BOUND TO EACH OTHER. YOUR QUEST IS *MY* QUEST.

YOU LEAD AND I'LL FOLLOW.

BUT FIRST.

NO! MAL!

HANG ON, MAL.

HANG ON. I'LL SAVE YOU!

THANKS, CHICKEN. WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?

YOU CAN PUT ME DOWN NOW. JUST ANYWHERE.

SKRAAK!

GOD! YOU UNDERSTAND PEOPLE TALK. DOWN ANYWHERE NOW.

WOW! LOOK AT THAT! THOSE BIRDS ARE TORMENTING THAT AIRSHIP.

NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT THOUGH.

HEY, WAIT! SLOW DOWN!

OWH! THIS DAMN SADDLE!

THUMP!

SCKREEAKKK!

I GET IT. YOU LIKE TO EAT THESE DARK WINGS.

I'LL JUST LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD HERE.

BANG!

IK!

HELP!

KRAK!

THEY'RE LEAVING. THEY DON'T LIKE CHICKEN MUCH.

OH MY NECK! I'M *BLEEDING!* THEY TRIED TO *KILL* ME.

GAK! ANOTHER ONE!

THUMP!

TAKE IT EASY. IT'S DEAD. I JUST HOPE YOUR FLYER CAN CARRY IT AND CHICKEN TOO.

YAAA! IT WANTS TO *EAT* ME!

CALM DOWN. THAT'S JUST CHICKEN. HE SCARED THOSE DARK WINGS OFF.

ARE YOU SURE? HE LOOKS LIKE A SKY PIRATE'S BIRD TO ME.

MY CREW IS DEAD. YOU MUST HELP ME TO HEAVEN!

HEAVEN?

THERE. THE FLOATING ESTATE WHERE I LIVE. FATHER WILL BE GRATEFUL, BUT HE MIGHT QUESTION YOUR DRESS.

GOD! THEY'RE BEING ***ATTACKED!***

HAW! NO PROBLEM. THEY'RE AFRAID OF CHICKEN TOO.

SON, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YES, FATHER. THIS MAN AND HIS BIRD FRIGHTENED THE SCORTURES AWAY.

"MAL WATCHED APPREHENSIVELY. HE REMEMBERED ZEG FROM AN EARLIER ENCOUNTER. THE OTHERS WERE UNKNOWN TO HIM. BUT DID ZEG REMEMBER HIM?"

YOUNG MAN, WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR YOU COMING TO MURK'S AID. PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR CELEBRATION BUT GET DRESSED FIRST.

A VERY SPECIAL MEAL IS BEING PREPARED. I THINK YOU WILL ENJOY IT.

AND TAKE ONE OF MY FEMALE ANGELS TO HELP YOU RELAX.

PUCCA!

PERHAPS THIS ONE? PUCCA HASN'T DELIVERED ANY YOUNG IN QUITE SOME TIME. SHE WAS MY COOK ONCE. A GOOD CHOICE.

"I THINK I'LL PAUSE THE STORY HERE.

"BUT WHAT HAPPENED?"

"WE WILL CONTINUE LATER."

BOG'S DEAL

THE SUN BEARS RELENTLESSLY UPON THE ISOLATED STONE STRUCTURE. A WARM BREEZE RUSTLES LOOSE SAND AS A SILENT SHADOW GLIDES ACROSS THE BAKED DUNES. SLIG BOG'S SQUINTY, GOGGLED EYES SEARCH FOR SOME SIGN OF LIFE, SOME SITUATION THAT MIGHT BE TURNED TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

HEY, GORNY, THIS BE FARTHER NORTH THAN WE'VE FLAPPED BEFORE. THAT ANCIENT TEMPLE OF THE DEAD BE WORTH A CLOSER LOOK, *EH?*

SLOW, BOY, AND LOWER. DO WE PERCEIVE SOME OVERRIPE FRUIT?

OOPS. A FLY IN THE OINTMENT. A ***BIG*** ONE.

AFTER HIS CHORES, A BATH AND A SHORT NAP, DEN IN A HALF-DREAMING REVERIE AWAITS SIENNA'S NEXT STORY. HE'S AWARE OF A DISTANT FLUTTERING.

HMM... A STRANGE **BIRD.** I DON'T THINK PHTHALO CAN CATCH IT, UNLESS IT COMES CLOSER. KEEP AN EYE ON IT WHILE I TAKE A SWIM.

STAY HERE, GORNY, AND BE QUIET. OLD BOG BE SMART AND USE HIS **WITS** AND **CHARM** THIS TIME.

HEY, BIG DUDE! NICE PLACE YOU HAVE HERE. MIND IF ME AND GORNY REST A SPELL?

ME BE **BOG,** SLIG BOG. WHAT YOU NAME?...OL' BOG LIKE TO GAMBLE, BUT NOT GOOD. BIG FELLA LIKE SPORT? SAY, WE PLAY GAME, *EH?* PEBBLE SHELLS? JACKS AND BALL? IVORY DICE? YOU **SURE** TO **WIN.**

FOR FUN, SLIG BOG BET HIS PAL GORNY AGAINST...**BROWN WOMAN.** OKAY?

HMPH! TOO **YELLOW** FOR A CHANCE, *EH?* OKAY. SHE NOT MUCH BUT BOG TRADE FOR HER. DRUGS? CIGARETTES? A PICTURE BOOK ABOUT A MAN IN BLACK LEATHER WITH **BAT** WINGS?

I'VE GOT IT! SOMETHING TO BRING YOU FAME AND FORTUNE. A ***MAP!*** IT SHOWS WHERE TO FIND A HIDDEN TREASURE.

A *FABULOUS* TREASURE BEYOND BELIEF.

A NAR STONE!

A *NAR STONE?* DON'T MENTION THOSE DAMNED THINGS AROUND ME, YOU HALF-PINT JERK OFF!

HEY, WATCH IT!

WHAT? DUDE *CHAINED!* BOG THINK MAN OWN WOMAN. *HAW!* WOMAN OWN *MAN!*

YOU IN *TROUBLE* NOW!

DAMN IT, LET GO!

HAW!

PUSH ME, *EH?* BIG SUCKER!

EH? GUN NO SHOOT!

HMPH!

BOG TAKE WOMAN ANYWAY! BYE!

HEY, TAWNY WENCH, GET YOU STUFF TOGETHER.

YOU COME WITH B--

YIPE!

HEY, MAN, NO HARD FEELING, OKAY? BOG IN FIX HERE.

HOW ABOUT A HAND?

FALLING ANGELS

MAL, KNOWN TO HIS HOSTS AS DAN, JOINED THEM IN THEIR EVENING MEAL. HE REMEMBERED THE OLD MAN FROM HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER ON THIS PLANET YEARS BEFORE. BUT ZEG SEEMED STRANGELY DIFFERENT NOW. YOUNGER IN AN ODD SORT OF WAY. MAL ALSO HAD CHANGED. HIS GENETIC MOLECULES WERE TOASTED BY THE SPACE CRAFT'S POWER PLANT, FATTENED BY PUCCA'S FOOD AND HARDENED BY KIL'S TRAINING. BUT DID ZEG RECOGNIZE HIM? HE COULDN'T BE SURE.

THIS IS AN ESPECIALLY HAPPY OCCASION FOR US. MURK HAS RETURNED WITH OUR SUPPLIES, NARROWLY ESCAPING DEATH THANKS TO OUR NEW MUSCULAR FRIEND, DAN.

I HAVE PREPARED A SPECIAL MEAL TO CELEBRATE. BLESS THIS FOOD. WE DRAW FROM IT LIFE, STRENGTH AND PLEASURE.

DAN, YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE THE FOOD HERE.

BUT SAVE ROOM FOR DESSERT.

OKAY, IT'S GOOD. BUT NOT ***THAT*** GOOD.

THANK YOU, LORD ZEG.

HERE, MY FRIENDS. THE SWEETLINS IS DONE.

BUT NOT ***TOO*** DONE.

SLOSH CRACKLE SNAP!

OUR HONORED GUEST SHALL TASTE FIRST.

DAN WAS REMINDED OF A PACK OF STARVING WOLVES.

THE AROMA WAS SLIGHTLY SWEET--

BUT SOMETHING TOLD HIM--

MAYBE HE SHOULDN'T EAT THIS.

SUDDENLY...

MURK!

HAUGH! GIVE ME THAT!

HEY, STOP!

DAMN YOU, HEATHENS!

QUITE DELICIOUS, LORD ZEG. I HOPE YOU'LL GIVE ME THE RECIPE FOR MY PEOPLE.

SORRY, DANIEL. IT IS MY OWN CREATION WHICH I GUARD JEALOUSLY. AND THE INGREDIENTS ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN.

I UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY. I THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO PARTAKE.

MURK, TAKE DANIEL TO PUCCA'S BED.

NICE PLACE YOU HAVE HERE, MURK.

IT'S NOT FAIR. THERE WAS ENOUGH FOR SECONDS. TAUG AND SCON WILL GET IT ALL.

POINT THE WAY FOR ME, AND YOU CAN RETURN FOR YOUR SHARE.

THAT ROUND BUILDING, SECOND LOFT ON THE LEFT. THANKS, DAN.

SUCH OBSESSIVE TASTE BUDS. I WONDER.

DAMNIT! THEY CLEANED IT OUT!

WAIT, MAYBE IN THE KITCHEN.

EXCUSE ME, SIR. YOU MUST BE LOST. ALLOW ME TO ESCORT YOU TO PUCCA'S NEST.

OH, CERTAINLY.

THANK YOU. YOUR NAME?

COTWUN, SIR. THE FIRST ANGEL. PLEASE FOLLOW.

I AM THE SENIOR BULL. MY MATE, MOTWUN, AND I MANAGED THE ANGELS AND OTHER HEAVENLY AFFAIRS FOR LORD ZEG.

THOSE ARISTOS ARE NUTS FOR THIS STUFF.

MOTWUN HAS BEEN RETIRED TO THE FRONTIERS.

AN ADDICTION I DON'T WANT TO ACQUIRE.

OUR LORD MASTER HAS PROMISED THAT I COULD JOIN HER SOON.

IN HERE, SIR. PUCCA IS WAITING.

COTWUN LEFT THEM TOGETHER. HE STARED AT HER SILENTLY. SHE SEEMED TO BE IN A TRANCE, OBLIVIOUS TO HIM. FINALLY A WHISPER.

PUCCA.

PUCCA. IT'S ME, MAL.

NO.

LORD ZEG SAID YOU ARE DANIEL.

I AM MAL, YOUR MATE.

WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?

WE ARE MATES NOW. BUT I DON'T KNOW YOU.

MY CHILDREN AND I HAVE ALWAYS LIVED HERE.

CHILDREN? ARE THESE OUR CHILDREN? WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES?

MY CHILDREN, ER MASTER ZEG'S CHILDREN, DAV AND ELE.

DAVID AND ELE, MY...

WE SAW YOU HAVE SUPPER WITH MASTER ZEG.

WHO ARE YOU?

I'M... YOUR UNCLE. UNCLE DAN.

I'M THE OLDEST KID HERE. ELE AND I PLAY. CAN YOU PLAY WITH US?

YES, DAVID. I'M YOUR FRIEND TOO.

IT IS TIME FOR THE CHILDREN TO SLEEP. DAN AND I MUST SERVE MASTER ZEG NOW.

SERVE?

WAIT! THESE CLEVER CHILDREN CAN HELP ME.

CAN YOU SEE THINGS AND FIND THINGS, DAVID AND ELE?

YES. I SAW YOU PRETEND TO EAT PLUMS AND HIDE THEM.

SMART BOY!

THEY'RE YOURS IF YOU CAN FIND WHERE THE GUNS ARE KEPT.

I CAN DO IT.

ME TOO!

GOOD! THIS IS OUR SECRET. THE ANGELS AND THE MASTERS MUST NOT SEE YOU. TELL ME TOMORROW.

DAV! ELE! THEY ARE GONE. WHY DID YOU TELL THEM THAT?

THEY NEED SOMETHING TO DO FOR A WHILE.

BUT YOU ARE PLANTING A SEED OF REBELLION IN THEIR LITTLE MINDS.

JUST A CHILDREN'S GAME.

YES. NOW WE MUST MAKE ANOTHER BABY FOR MASTER ZEG.

MASTER ZEG? PUCCA, WE MAKE LOVE BECAUSE WE LOVE EACH OTHER. I DON'T LOVE ZEG.

DON'T SAY THAT!

HE MIGHT HEAR YOU.

PUCCA, MAYBE IT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO BECOME PREGNANT.

STOP SAYING ALL THOSE EVIL THINGS. I MUST PRODUCE A BABY FOR ZEG.

OH, I SEE.

I'VE GOT A TERRIFIC IDEA, PUCCA. A WAY YOU CAN MAKE MORE AND BETTER BABIES FOR MASTER ZEG.

BZZZ. BZZZ. BZZZ.

IT'LL WORK! A SHORT CUT TO YOUR BELLY.

OKAY.

POP

SPUT

GLOP!

MORNING FOUND DAN WATCHING PUCCA NURSE THE CHILDREN WHILE EATING SOME WHITE BISCUITS AGAIN. SHE SEEMED DISTANT, ALMOST SOMNAMBULISTIC.

UNEASILY, HE LEFT AND TENDED THE CHICKEN'S INJURY.

MURK WAS EATING IN THE MASTER'S DINING ROOM.

HERE! IT'S JUST FRUIT AND BREAD THIS MORNING. THE DESSERT'S ALL GONE. ZEG NEVER MAKES ENOUGH OF THE SWEETLINS.

WE MAY HAVE SOME STEW LEFTOVERS LATER THOUGH. NOT QUITE AS TENDER OR VIRGIN AS THE SWEETLINS, BUT GOOD. ZEG HAS A SPECIAL WAY TO KEEP IT FRESH. HE'S PRETTY SMART WITH THAT CHEMISTRY STUFF.

I TRY TO KEEP THINGS CLEAN AND WHITE, BUT WHEN I'M AWAY ON MY STUDY RETREATS, THE BOYS GET LAX. THIS IS THE RESULT. THESE NASTY WEEDS GET A FOOTHOLD AND IT'S A MAJOR JOB CLEARING THEM AWAY.

OKAY, ANGELS, DOWN YOU GO!

ISN'T THAT TOO DANGEROUS?

DANGEROUS? YES. BUT NECESSARY TO GET RID OF THAT PARASITIC CANCER.

ALL THAT WEIGHT ON THE CART--?

NO. TAUG ENGINEERED THE RIG. IT'LL HOLD.

SQUEE.

SNAP

YAAAH!

HELP THEM, YOU FOOL!

THEY'RE GONERS! AND GET YOUR HAND OFF ME!

HANG ON, COTTU!

COURAGE!

IT'S NO USE. IF WE CAN CLIMB UP, THEY'LL JUST SEND US DOWN AGAIN.

NO!

GOODBYE, COTWUN.

COTTU!

COTTU WAS RIGHT. IT'S NO USE.

NO USE.

WHAP

UP HERE! DON'T LOOK DOWN!

COTWUN! YOU SHOWED ME THE WAY LAST NIGHT. YOU FOLLOW ME TODAY.

GRAB HERE! SEE, THE TENACIOUS VINE IS STRONG. IT'LL HOLD US.

AH!

THAT'S IT. DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT.

STOP THAT, SCON!

THAT DEVIL GRABBED ME. IF HE HADN'T FALLEN, I'D HAVE KILLED HIM.

HMPH!

METAL SCAFFOLDING, COTWUN. WE'LL MAKE IT YET.

A GRILL OPENING. IT'S RUSTED SHUT. C'MON, COTWUN. GIVE IT ALL YOU'VE GOT.

KA BLAINGK!

WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO RIG UP SOMETHING ELSE. THAT VINE HAS TO GO.

IS THAT A MAINTENANCE PASSAGE OR AIR DUCT?

I DON'T KNOW, SIR. I'VE NEVER BEEN DOWN HERE.

THESE HALLS HAVE BEEN UNTREADED FOR MANY YEARS.

A BLOCKED HATCH. PUSH!

GREEENH

GRUNND

SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE. I SENSE ANOTHER PRESENCE.

UGH, THAT SMELL!

A SOMBOSUCKER!

LOOK OUT! IT'S POISON!

SKREEEK

UNPH!

HAUGH!

THUD!

QUICK, GIVE ME YOUR ROBE!

RIP

SCROOWRR

THUB!

SKRAK SMAK SMAK SPLAK

YOU KILLED IT! THEY SAY ITS BITE WILL KNOCK YOU OUT, THEN IT SUCKS OUT YOUR VISCERA.

LOOK, IT'S HOOKED UP TO TUBES.

AND WE'RE IN A CAGE.

ZEG KEPT THIS THING FOR SOME REASON.

WHERE DO THOSE TUBES LEAD?

A HOLDING TANK FULL OF THE CREATURE'S POISON.

THIS POWDER-- THESE BARRELS AND SACKS FULL OF FLOUR.

THEY MAKE ANGEL FOOD HERE.

I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME THEY RAN OUT OF THIS INGREDIENT.

GLIK GLIK GLIK

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

YOUR PEOPLE ARE ENSLAVED, COTWUN. MAYBE YOU'LL WAKE UP TO THAT FACT NOW.

I FEEL MORE REVELATIONS ARE AHEAD. ARE YOU READY?

AS SOON AS I GET DRESSED. I AM THE STRONGEST...AND BIGGEST OF MY PEOPLE, BUT IN YOUR COMPANY, MASTER DANIEL, I SHOULD COVER MYSELF.

THE DAY GROWS LONG.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR PEOPLE WHEN THEY DIE?

DIE? EXCEPT FOR THE FALLS AND SCORT ATTACKS, NONE HAVE DIED. THE BODIES ARE TAKEN TO THE SURFACE FOR BURIAL.

WHAT ABOUT THE OLDER PEOPLE?

OLDER ANGELS RETIRE TO THE FRONTIER. I WILL SOON JOIN MY MATE, MOTWUN, THERE.

AS THE TWO MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE LABYRINTHINE TUNNELS, DAN'S FLYING FRIEND, THE CHICKEN, IS HUNGRY AND INITIATES A HUNT.

PUCCA, MY LITTLE BLACK ANGEL. TELL ME ABOUT THE NEW MALE I SENT TO YOU.

YES, MY LORD. COTWUN BROUGHT HIM TO MY NEST. WE TALKED, THEN MATED.

DID HE GIVE YOU HIS SEED?

COUGH! COUGH! YES, LORD. I GAVE IT TO COTWUN FOR YOU.

OF COURSE YOU DID. GOOD. HE WON'T BE NEEDED AGAIN. DID YOU LIKE IT?

I LIKED IT, SIRE *CHOKE* BECAUSE I SERVED YOU.

GOOD CHILD.

AND DID YOU REMAIN DRESSED?

YES, LORD.

YOU MAY RETURN TO YOUR DUTIES, PUCCA.

LORD--

WILL HE RETURN?

GO NOW, PUCCA.

JUST A MOMENT. REMEMBER, PUCCA, OUR HOLY DUTY IS TO POPULATE THIS DESOLATE WORLD WITH OUR PEOPLE. WE HAVE SENT MANY CHERUBS TO FRONTIER REGIONS FOR THEIR SCHOOLING. YOU ARE SPECIAL TO ME, PUCCA, AND I HAVE ALLOWED YOUR CHILDREN TO REMAIN WITH YOU PAST THEIR TIME.

BUT NOW WE HAVE THE MEANS TO MAKE YOU PREGNANT, AND YOUR LITTLE ANGELS MUST GO ON TO FULFILL THEIR DESTINIES.

SAY YOUR GOODBYES TONIGHT. TOMORROW SEND THEM TO ME FOR A SPECIAL PARTY.

ABOUT TIME, I'D SAY.

SHE WON'T REMEMBER ZEG.

WITH HEAVY HEART, PUCCA RETURNED TO HER LOFT. SHE TRIED TO UNDERSTAND THE APPROACHING LOSS OF HER CHILDREN. THE EVENING BREEZE WHIPPED HER ROBE. PUNGENT ODORS OF THE FRESH WHITEWASH CAKED ON THE TREES FILLED THE AIR. SLOWLY THE FEARFUL THOUGHT BEGAN TO FADE.

WHO'RE THESE KIDS PLAYING IN THE BUSHES. LOOKS LIKE DAVID AND ELE.

UNCLE DAN!

WE SEE YOU FALL!

NOW YOU SEE WE DIDN'T FALL.

WOW!

DO YOU REMEMBER OUR BARGAIN?

SURE!

GUNS!

IN BOX!

IN MASTER'S CLOSET.

MURK KEEPS HIS.

SO DOES TAUG.

GOOD KIDS!

WE'LL ALL GO ON A TRIP SOON.

NOW COTWUN AND I HAVE SOME WORK TO DO.

YOU KIDS PLAY.

WAIT, MASTER DANIEL. WE MUST TALK. YOU SAVED ME AND SHOWED ME STRANGE THINGS.

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WE WORSHIP ZEG. YOU SAY IT IS BAD. I CANNOT BELIEVE IT. ZEG LOVES US.

LOVE! I THINK WE CAN LEARN ABOUT HIS SPECIAL LOVE IN THE KITCHEN.

WHAT?

DID YOU REPLACE THE ANGELS' FOOD WITH THE UNTREATED FLOUR?

WAIT. SOMEONE'S THERE.

IT'S MURK. HE'S ALWAYS HUNGRY.

CHEW...CHEW THIS IS TOO TOUGH.

ANYTHING LEFT A LITTLE MORE TENDER?

HELLO IN THERE. ARE THERE ANY GOOD BITS OF YOU LEFT?

COTWUN STARES AT THE FLESHY FRAGMENT ON THE FLOOR. A SLOW HORROR OF REALIZATION AWAKENS IN HIS NUMBED BRAIN.

IT REMINDED HIM OF MOTWUN'S TATTOO IDENTIFICATION. BUT SHE WENT TO THE FRONTIER TO RETIRE.

I WAS TO JOIN HER SOON.

STEADY, COTWUN.

IT CAN'T BE.

WE MUST MAKE A PLAN.

HE'S LEAVING.

I'M NOT EATING THAT STUFF UNLESS ZEG SPICES IT UP INTO A STEW OR SOUP.

CAN'T WAIT TO TASTE THOSE LITTLE BROWN ONES.

A PLAN. WE NEED A PLAN.

OUR GOD IS A ***DEVIL.*** HE EATS US.

GO MAKE YOUR PLANS.

LEAVE ME NOW.

LET'S SEE--ESCAPE ON CHICKEN. ***DAMN!*** HE'S GONE. ANGELS TOO DRUGGED TO HELP. WHAT'S ***THAT?***

OH ***HELL NO!*** A LARGE FLYER. ZEG'S REINFORCEMENTS. DAMN THE LUCK. NOW WHAT? CAN COTWUN AND I DEFEAT ZEG'S CLAN--AND ***THEM*** TOO? ***YIPE!***

MOTWUN--

"DEN, ONCE AGAIN WE PAUSE. THESE IMAGES ARE EXHAUSTING IN THE EXTREME. WE REQUIRE REST AND DIVERSION BEFORE THE CONCLUSION IS REVEALED."

MOLA THE MOLE

CLOUDS MOVE SLOWLY. DESERT INSECTS BUZZ THEIR TINY LIVES AWAY. OH, WHAT A **FIX!** GORNY THE BIRD WON'T WAIT FOR BOG VERY LONG. THAT BIG BLUE LIZARD WOULD **EAT** BOG AND GORNY TOO IF HE COULD CATCH THEM.

BOG CAUGHT IN HOLE IN STONE WALL. ONLY WAY OUT GUARDED BY BIG BLUE LIZARD. SHIT!

BOG COULD **SHOOT** LIZARD AND FLY AWAY ON GORNY--? GOOD IDEA? NO. BIG MAN **BREAK** GUN. NO SHOOT NOW.

WHAT THAT ***PANTING*** NOISE?

HMPH! BIG MAN AND WOMAN WRESTLING AGAIN. BOG THRASH BIG MAN. ALMOST KILL HIM. THEN LIZARD COME. BOG HIDE. BIG BLUE LIZARD DON'T EAT ***THEM.*** HOW COME?

SCRAPE

SCUFF

BOG MUST THINK OF PLAN. ESCAPE FROM LIZARD. TAKE BROWN WOMAN AND FLY AWAY ON--*EH?* WHAT ***THAT?***

WHAT THE--STRANGE CREATURE DIG FROM HOLE. ***HEY,*** WHERE YOU COME FROM?

BOOGA WAAGA WOOLA. ZU ZU!

ZEGA MOLA!

MOLA ZUT WAAGA ***BOOGA!***

IT BE A DIGGER. A ***TREASURE*** DIGGER. WHAT ***LOOT!*** MAYBE BOG'S LUCK TURN.

MOLA. BOG ***WOOGA WOOGA!***

HEY, WAIT MINUTE! BOG WANT TREASURE. THAT ***ALL!***

BOG MOLA ***SHU SHU.***

YES. BOG AND MOLA CAN FIND MUCH GOLD AND ARTIFACTS OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION THAT ONCE LIVE HERE. SELL TO ***TOURISTS*** IN BUTAG.

MOLA ***WOOGA*** *SHU BOG.*

BOG PAY PRICE, *EH?* OKAY, MOLA GET BOG OUT OF HERE. THEN MAKE DEAL.

MOLA *WAAGA!*

YES! MOLA TAKE BOG BACK THROUGH ***TUNNEL!***

*UR--*IT LOOK ***SMALL.*** MAYBE ***TOO*** SMALL.

ERG--UNGH! HELP PULL! ***OUCH!*** NOT ***THAT.***

NO USE! HOLE TOO SMALL.

SHAGA BOOT!

MOLA LA ***GOOMA.***

NO! BOG ***NO*** THINK MOLA SHOULD GO THAT WAY.

THERE WAS--OH? OKAY, CLEAR NOW?

SHOMBA NU!

ZUK--

CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH!

SPITUEY

CLUNK

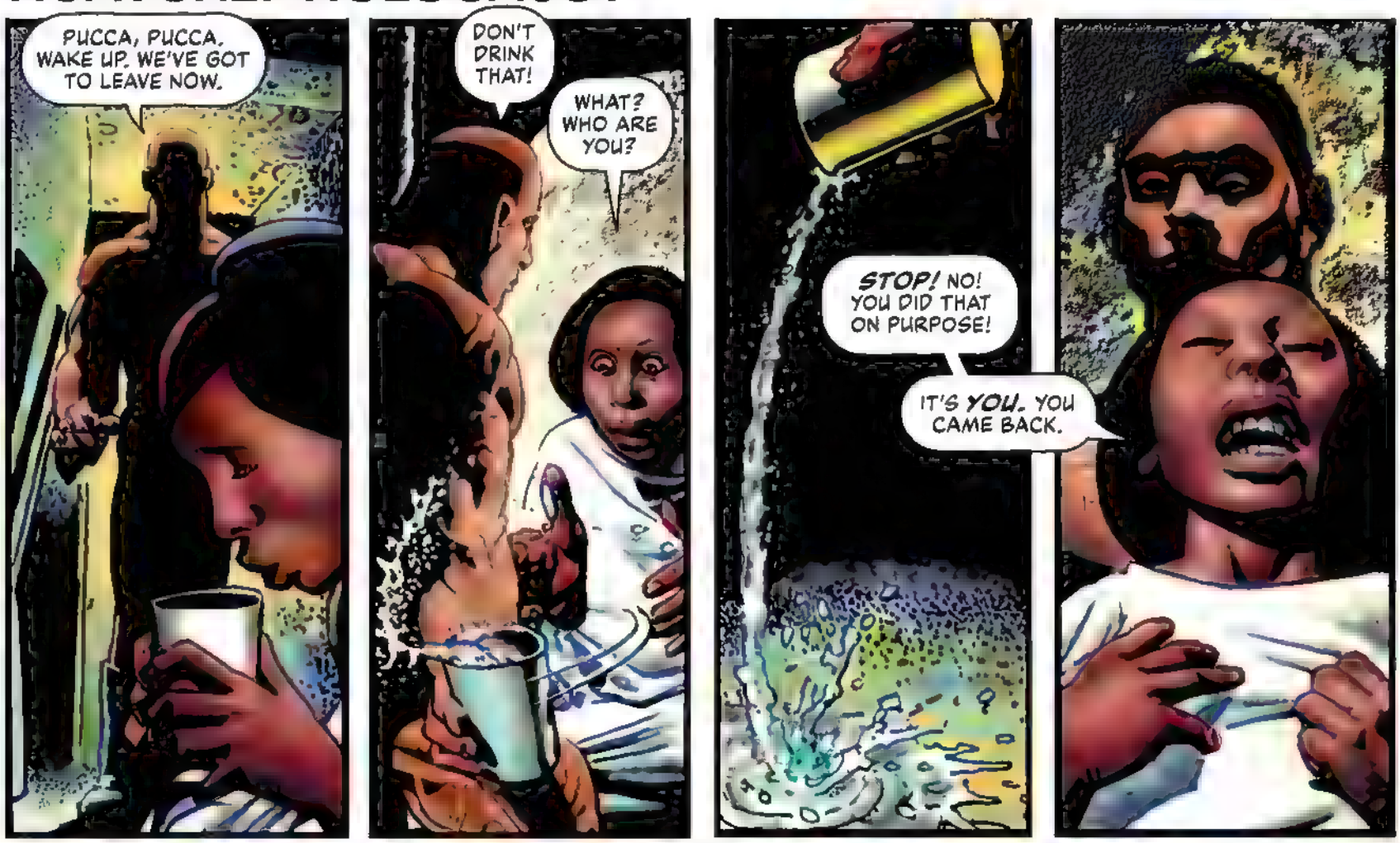
MMM--MOLA HAT COME BACK.

WOBBLE

MAYBE COULD SELL IN BUTAG-- FOR PAPER WEIGHT. *UGH!* MOLA HEAD STILL INSIDE.

BUT BOG NEED PLAN. MAYBE BIG MAN HELP BOG. *HMPH!* THEY AT IT ***AGAIN***--OR ***STILL***, IS THAT ALL THEY ***DO?*** DON'T THEY REALIZE LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE GOING ON.

HEAVENLY HOLOCAUST


PUCCA, PUCCA. WAKE UP. WE'VE GOT TO LEAVE NOW.
DON'T DRINK THAT!
WHAT? WHO ARE YOU?
STOP! NO! YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE!
IT'S YOU. YOU CAME BACK.

THEY WERE HERE. LORD ZEG SENT FOR THEM. HE'S GIVING THEM A SPECIAL PARTY BEFORE THEY'RE SENT TO THE FRONTIERS.

NO! PUT ON YOUR BOOTS. WE'VE GOT TO FIND THEM, AND FAST.

C'MON.

LOOK. A CRUISER IS COMING.

THAT'S WHY WE MUST HURRY.

OLD GRANDPA ZEG LOVES LITTLE DAV AND ELE. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A SPECIAL PARTY. THERE'LL BE SWEETIES, DRINKS AND A *GAME!* WHAT FUN!

OH, YOU'RE PLUMP LITTLE DARLINGS. DRINK THE PUNCH, ALL OF IT.

WASN'T IT *GOOD?* NOW WE'LL PLAY A GAME. YOU BOTH SIT THERE AND GRANDPA ZEG WILL SNEAK UP AND TOUCH YOU FROM BEHIND. IF YOU FEEL IT, YOU MUST SAY, *"OUCH, NOT READY, GRANDPA?"* OKAY?

EEEYYAAAAUGHH!!

BLAM BLAM

GRANDPA, WHAT WAS THAT?

HMPH! OF ALL TIMES!

YOU KIDS STAY HERE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK AND WE'LL FINISH THE GAME.

GEE. I FEEL SLEEPY. I WISH HE'D HURRY FAST.

WE HAVE TO STAY AWAKE.

WHERE YOU GO? HE SAID STAY!

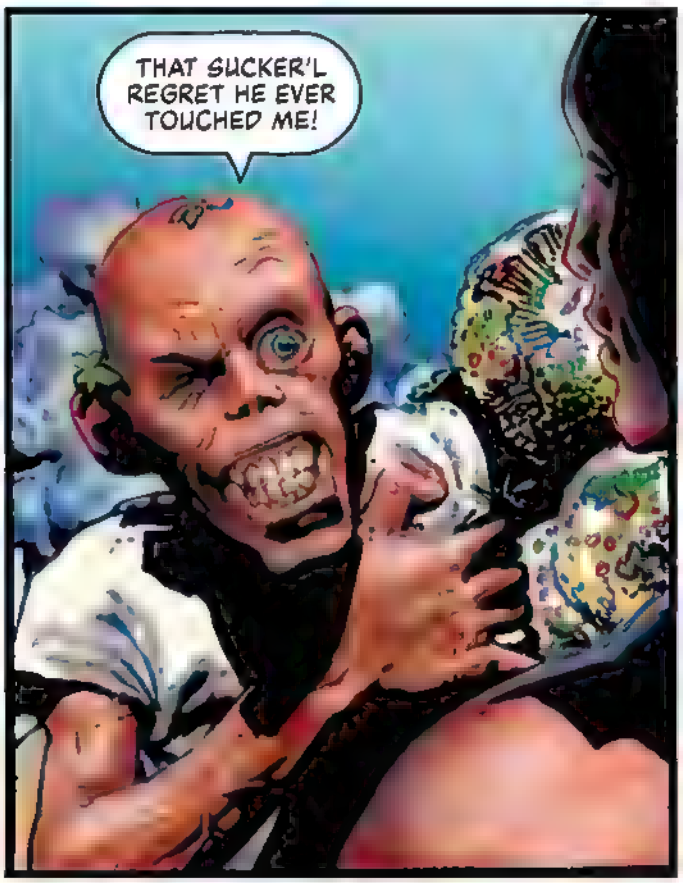
DON'T FEEL GOOD. WANT MOMMY.

THAT SCREAM AND SHOTS. TROUBLE IN THE KITCHEN.

AAIIEH!

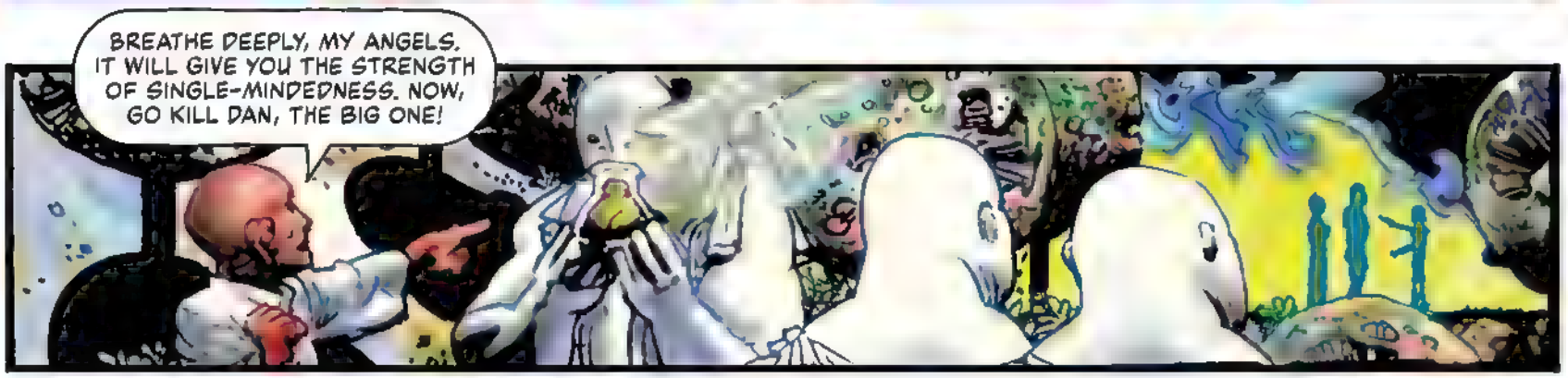
MURK!

D-DANIEL, HELP ME. THAT DAMNED BULL ***COTWUN'S*** GONE CRAZY--TRIED TO ***KILL*** ME.


THAT SUCKER'L REGRET HE EVER TOUCHED ME!

WAIT A-- YOU FELL TODAY--AND COTWUN, TOO!
MURK, HAVE YOU SEEN THE CHILDREN, DAV AND ELE?

NEVER MIND THEM. I'M IN PAIN. TEND TO MY INJURIES.
WHERE ARE THEY, MURK?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. I GUESS PUCCA'S PUT YOU UP TO THIS. WELL, THEY'RE OURS AND YOU'LL GET NONE OF THEM--NOT EVEN A BITE!


BREATHE DEEPLY, MY ANGELS. IT WILL GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS. NOW, GO KILL DAN, THE BIG ONE!

SMAK!

DAMN YOU, DAN--YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS! SEE, GUARDS ARE COMING.

YOU WOULD EAT MY CHILDREN...

NO, PUCCA. IT WAS A JOKE.

DAN. NAME ANY PRICE--JUST KILL THIS BITCH.

IT WAS A JOKE!

STOP!

THUD

RRRRIIIP!

AAAAAHHH!

PUCCA, FIND THE CHILDREN AND GO TO THE AIR BOAT.

BUT THESE GUARDS--

NEVER MIND. I'LL MEET YOU THERE.

THUD!

WWHIPP

VvVvRRRRRRRRRR

SKRAK!

THWAK!

WWWHHIIIPP!

KNUNK!

CRACK!

CAPTAIN SLIQUE, YOU GOT HERE JUST IN TIME. THERE'S A RENEGADE SLAVE RUNNING AMOK. CATCH HIM AND BRING HIM TO ME, BUT DON'T KILL HIM.

WHAT'S HE LOOK LIKE?

HE'S BIG, BROWN, AND NAKED--AND THERE'S' A BLACK FEMALE TOO.

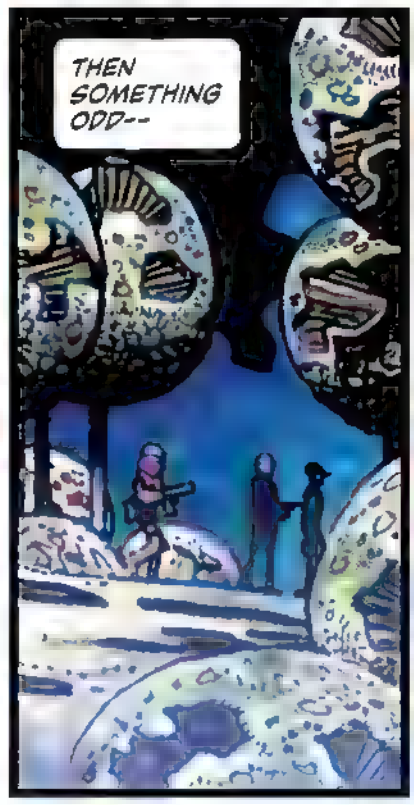
NOW I MUST GET BACK. I'VE GOT SOMETHING COOKING.

OKAY, BOYS, A LITTLE CHORE BEFORE YOU GO OFF-DUTY. WEAPONS READY.

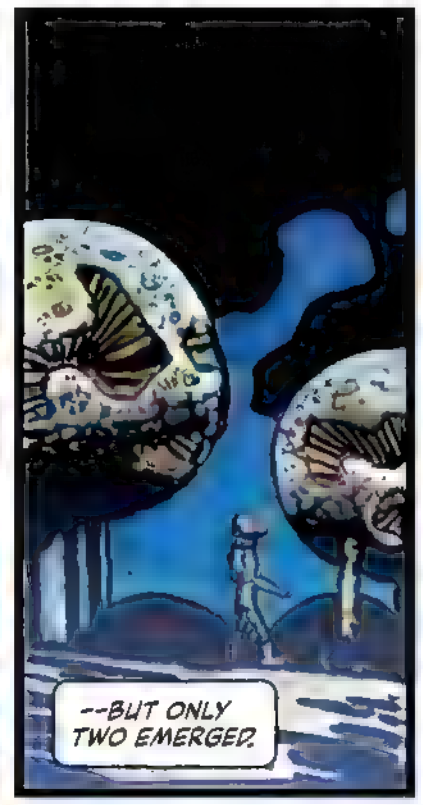
FAN OUT--ONE SWEEP SHOULD FLUSH HIM OUT.

AS HE DUCKED INTO THE UNDERBRUSH, MAL NOTICED THAT CHICKEN HAD RETURNED--PERHAPS AN ALTERNATE MEANS OF ESCAPE.

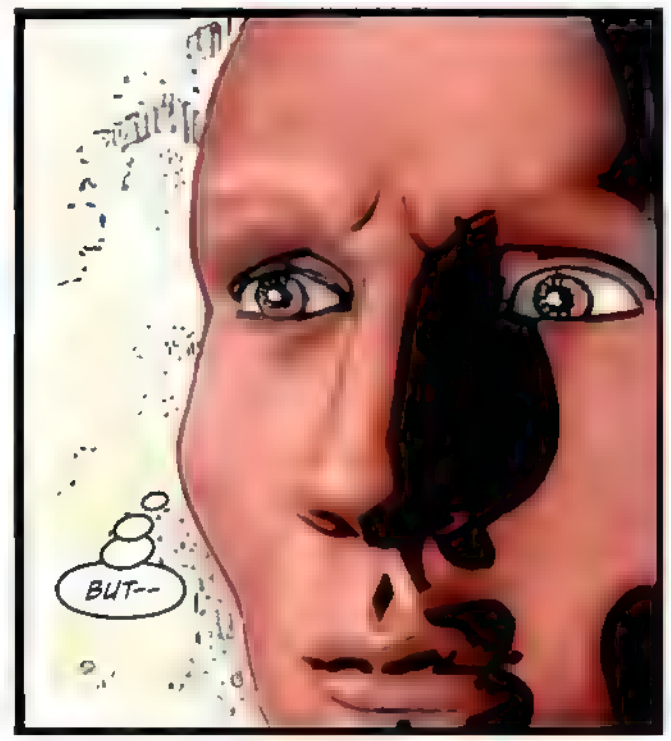
HE WATCHED APPREHENSIVELY AS THE SOLDIERS APPROACHED.


THEN SOMETHING ODD--

THREE PASSED BEHIND TREES--


--BUT ONLY TWO EMERGED.

BUT NO TIME TO WASTE PONDERING PUZZLES. I'VE GOT TO FIND DAV AND ELE.


BUT--

A LARGE WHITE FIGURE SAT TREMBLING IN THE KITCHEN.

COTWUN, COME WITH ME.

THE BULL ANGEL LOOKED UP AND STARED BLANKLY AT MAL.

WE MUST HURRY. ESCAPE WITH ME NOW AND WE CAN RETURN TO FIGHT LATER.

MOMENTS PASSED. THE WHITE EXPRESSION WAS UNFATHOMABLE.

YOU'LL NOT ESCAPE, MURDERER.

WHAT?

MASTER TAUG TOLD ME. YOU KILLED MOTWUN.

NO, COTWUN. IT'S A LIE, I COULDN'T HAVE. THINK!

MASTER TAUG TOLD ME--

--YOU KILL--

SPLUNK!

--ED HER.

THUD

YOU MUST BE--

THWAK!

--PUNISHED!

AAAWWGH!

CRASH!

PJW PJW TAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAAAA

P-TOW

WHAT TH--

BUMPH

KWAK!!

MAL VAINLY STRUGGLED TO REGAIN HIS SENSES. TAUG COVERED HIS FACE WITH A STRANGE SMELLING CLOTH WHICH SENT THE MUSCULAR GIANT INTO NUMBING RED DEPTHS.

CHOKE ON THIS, YOU **BASTARD!**

AFTER SWIMMING FOR WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN SLOWLY DRIFTED INTO A VERTIGINOUS SENSATION OF MOVEMENT.

SMALL DISTANT SOUNDS RATTLED IN HIS HELPLESS BRAIN.

MY, MY, MY. YOU WERE CERTAINLY CAUSING US A LOT OF TROUBLE.

BUT YOU SEEM TO HAVE CALMED DOWN NOW.

YOU WERE REALLY UPSET WEREN'T YOU, DANIEL--ER--**MAL.** YES, I REMEMBER WHO YOU **REALLY** ARE.

MAL TRIED TO MOVE. HIS LIMBS WERE NUMB, DEAD MEAT.

YOU WERE THAT ONE-TIME SKINNY PIRATE WHO COLLABORATED WITH MY SLAVE TO STEAL MY TREASURES. I TOOK HER BACK AND NOW YOU'VE RETURNED TO STIR THINGS UP AGAIN. BUT YOUR PLAN WON'T WORK THIS TIME.

YOU'VE BEEN A *BAD BOY*, MAL.

SOME PUNISHMENT IS DUE. OH, NOTHING TOO EXTREME. WE'RE NOT BARBARIANS HERE.

...AND YOU'RE MUCH TOO VALUABLE FOR ANY *PERMANENT* DAMAGE.

YOUR PUNISHMENT IS--

"--*KNOWLEDGE.* KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE.

"YOUR GIRLFRIEND, PUCCA, MY SLAVE...WILL PRODUCE *BABIES* FOR ME. ONE OF MY INVENTIONS, A CHEMICAL ACCELERATOR, WILL SHORTEN THE INTERVALS BETWEEN HARVESTS."

AND MAL, YOU SHALL BE MY ALLY. YOU WON'T REMEMBER ANY OF THIS UNPLEASANTNESS. YOU WILL KEEP HER IMPREGNATED.

AND I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU, TOO. YOU AND I WILL BE CLOSER THAN BROTHERS-- IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

YUM. THIS SWEETLIN IS REALLY MOUTHWATERING. I'VE DEVELOPED A WONDERFUL PROCESS HERE. THE MEAT IS STILL ***ALIVE***-- EVEN THROUGH MOST OF THE COOKING.

:SLURP: :CRUNCH: MMM, ***DELICIOUS!***

SINCE I PREFER MINE RARE, THIS PIECE CAN PROBABLY FEEL EVERY ***BITE*** I TAKE.

WHAT ARE YOU FRETTING ABOUT? OH, THOSE KIDS? YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THEM ANY LONGER.

WHICH ONE WAS THIS? IT WAS--*ER*--NO.

I CAN'T REMEMBER.

WELL, WHICHEVER ONE THE DRUG BROUGHT DOWN FIRST.

AH YES, I CAN TELL THE BOY FROM THE GIRL BY THE ***TASTE.***

I MADE THIS AS A TREAT FOR MY SONS AND THE CRUISER CREW. BUT SINCE ***MURK*** IS NO LONGER WITH US--

--I THINK *YOU* SHOULD HAVE HIS SHARE.

MAL'S SPIRIT DESCENDS EVER DEEPER INTO IMPOTENT DESPAIR.

COME ON, MAL. GET UP. I WANT YOU TO ***TASTE*** SOMETHING.

HE LAY DEFEATED AND HOPELESS.

PROP HIM UP, COTWUN. I WANT HIM TO HAVE SOME OF THIS.

COTWUN'S BIG HAND SCOOPS HIS HEAD AND LIFTS HIM UP.

HE FINDS HIMSELF STARING AT TWO LITTLE FACES HIDING IN THE AIR BOAT. WAS IT SOME FINAL CRUEL DREAM TO TORMENT HIS LAST MOMENTS. IT APPEARS TO BE PUCCA AND ONE OF THE CHILDREN.

COULD IT BE?

WAKE UP, MAL.

DON'T WASTE IT ON HIM.

HE'S GOT TO TASTE IT.

MAL STARES.

A TINY SPARK OF LIFE GREW IN HIS HEART.

PTOW! POW POW

WHAT'S THAT?

THEY CAN'T STILL BE SEARCHING FOR THIS DAMNED *PIG.*

THE SPARK BILLOWS INTO A SURGING FIRE. MAL'S NERVOUS SYSTEM STRUGGLES TO THROW OFF THE NUMBING DRUG.

THE FIRE OF PASSION EXPLODES. HE IS UP AND RUNNING BEFORE HIS ANTAGONISTS CAN THINK.

YAAAAAAAUUGH!

POWER ON--

STARTER PRESSED--

CLIK.

TWIRRR

BUT COTWUN'S MASSIVE ARMS CLAMP DOWN--

KAKAKBBRRRRROOOUUUMMMMMM

AND DRAG THE DAZED HERO BACK.

THE DRUG SMOTHERS AND PULLS AT HIM. ONE LAST WRENCHING EFFORT.

HUURGH!

A HEART BREAKING SHOVE. THE BUZZING FLYER IS AIRBORNE AND HIS FAMILY IS FREE.

THAT BLACK SLAVE IS ABOARD.

STOP THEM! SHOOT!

GET THEM, TAUG!

NO USE! TOO DARK!

TSCATATATATATAT

DAMN!

THE ECHOING CHATTER OF TAUG'S AUTOMATIC WEAPON JARS MAL'S MEMORY. HE'S HEARD THAT PARTICULAR SOUND BEFORE.

YOU ASSHOLE!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

YOU'RE THE SON OF A BITCH THAT ***MURDERED*** PUCCA'S MOTHER.

ENERGY AND STRENGTH SWELL BACK INTO MASSIVE BROWN MUSCLES, BUT COTWUN HOLDS TENACIOUSLY.

YEAH! SO WHAT?

YOU'RE ***SCUM!*** YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BREATHE. YOU'LL ***PAY*** FOR THAT CRIME.

THAT'S VERY FUNNY, 'CAUSE ***YOU'RE*** THE ONE ABOUT READY FOR OBLIVION.

NO, TAUG! I NEED HIM!

SORRY, ZEG. THIS TIME YOU'LL HAVE TO INDULGE MY WANTS, AND I WANT TO ***KILL*** HIM.

OH--VERY WELL. AT LEAST I STILL HAVE HIS SPERM TO WORK WITH.

HEAR THAT, MAL? YOUR LAST THOUGHTS WILL BE ABOUT YOUR UNBORN CHILDREN. THEY'LL ALL WIND UP ON OUR DINNER TABLE. ***HA, HA, HA!***

THINK ABOUT IT, MAL. SAVOR THE THOUGHT OF ME *EATING* YOUR BABIES.

PUNT!

?

PUNT!

PUNT!

KLAK KLATTER

PUNT!

KR-THUMP!

WHO'S THAT?

CRAK!

AWWH!

KIL!

YES, MAL. YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D FORGET YOU, DID YOU?

WHEN THE CHICKEN CAME BACK ALONE, I WAS SURE YOU'D GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO TROUBLE AGAIN.

WHAT ABOUT THE SOLDIERS?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. SAY-- DO YOU NEED HELP GETTING LOOSE?

OR AM I INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?

VERY FUNNY.

TH-BUMP

COTWUN, YOU CAN'T ***STILL*** BELIEVE I KILLED YOUR MATE.

NO. MASTER ZEG DESTROYED MY REASON AND WILL. ***KILL*** ME, DANIEL. I DESERVE IT.

YOU AND I ARE BROTHERS IN SORROW. THEY ATE YOUR MATE. HE ATE MY SON.

I DON'T BLAME YOU. YOU'VE SUFFERED ENOUGH, BUT YOU CAN HELP ME NOW.

HOW, DANIEL?

FIND ZEG. EACH MINUTE HE LIVES IS AGONIZING TORMENT TO MY SOUL.

WE'LL TEAR OUT HIS EVIL HEART.

I'M SORRY, MAL

A QUIVERING GIGGLE INTERRUPTS THEM.

MAL, YOU'LL NEVER GET HIM. HE'S WAY TOO SMART FOR YOU.

DANIEL, LOOK THERE! OLD ZEG HAS ESCAPED IN HIS AIR CAR.

DAMN!

HEH, HEH, HEH! I TOLD YOU. YOUR BABY GOES WITH HIM AND IT'S STILL ALIVE. HE'S OUTSMARTED YOU.

COTWUN, REMAIN HERE AND LEAD YOUR PEOPLE. THEY'RE GOING TO NEED IT. WE'LL LEAVE THE CRUISER FOR YOUR USE. KIL AND I ARE GOING AFTER ZEG ON THE CHICKEN.

ZEG'LL EAT HIM BIT BY BIT. AND HE'LL FELL EVERY BITE. HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL, YOU PIG?

HAW, HAW! AND WHEN HE'S DONE WITH THAT ONE, HE'LL GROW SOME MORE BABIES FROM YOUR SPERM.

YOUR SEED SHALL LIVE ON AS OUR FOOD SUPPLY. I ***SALUTE*** YOU, MAL.

JUST A SECOND, KIL. THERE A PROMISE I HAVE TO KEEP.

MAL STANDS OVER THE DYING FORM OF TAUG. HE PAUSES, HIS HATCHET FOOT HOVERS IN READINESS. SHOULD HE FINISH HIM?

AS DAWN BREAKS, MAL AND KIL ARE ASTRIDE THE CHICKEN'S BACK SEARCHING FOR THEIR SWORN ENEMY, RISKING EVERYTHING ON THIS ADVENTURE.

PUCCA AND HER CHILD HAD AWKWARDLY LANDED THE AIR BOAT AND THEY SET ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF THEIR OWN SURVIVAL.

DEN, THIS NARRATIVE HAS NOW REACHED AN UNRESOLVED STOPPING POINT. I THINK YOU WILL HAVE TO SEEK YOUR ELUSIVE ANSWERS ELSEWHERE. I CAN TELL YOU NO MORE.

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

DEN IDLY WATCHED THE FLUID FLOATING MOVEMENTS OF MINUTE DUST PARTICLES DANCING IN THE WHITE-HOT SHAFT. SIENNA'S STORIES SEEMED INCOMPLETE. THEY ANSWERED A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS DIM PAST, BUT PRESENTED A HOST OF NEW ONES. NOW THE INDIAN WOMAN SEEMED EVASIVE AND DISINTERESTED IN REVEALING THE LAST CHAPTER THAT MIGHT TIE THE DIVERSE ELEMENTS INTO ONE BIG COHESIVE, LOGICAL AND SATISFYING KNOT. HE CLOSED HIS EYES FOR A FEW MOMENTS. HER MOVEMENTS BECAME MORE INSISTENT.

C'MON, DEN! YOU'RE STARTING TO GET ***LAZY.***

I TOLD YOU THE SIGNS AND VISIONS ARE TOO VAGUE FOR ANOTHER STORY. THE TRUTH YOU SEEK IS BURIED ***DEEP*** IN THE RECESSES OF YOUR TINY BRAIN. I'M TRYING MY BEST TO PULL THE SPARK FROM ITS HIDING PLACE, BUT YOU MUST ***COOPERATE.***

TINY BRAIN?

DEN OPENED HIS EYES. SIENNA SEEMED BLURRY. HE FELT AS IF HE WERE A SPECTATOR VIEWING THE SCENE IN A DREAMING FOG.

DON'T FORGET, ***PHTHALO*** WOULD STILL LIKE A CHANCE AT YOU.

THERE, THAT'S BETTER! GOOD BOY, ***GOOD!***

MMMM! GOOD DEN, **GOOD!** GIVE IT TO ME. GIVE IT-- ATTA BOY--ATTA-- AT--A--A

RRGH!

THAT WAS A GOOD BOY. I WOULDN'T BE A BIT SURPRISED IF YOU DIDN'T **SOON** FIND THE TRUTH YOU SEEK.

DEN LAY ON THE PALLET AFTER SHE LEFT, FEELING A BIT LIKE A SLAB OF MEAT ON A PLATTER. HE SLOWLY BECAME AWARE OF A FAINT DIGGING SOUND IN THE WALL. IT GREW STEADILY LOUDER UNTIL IT BROKE THROUGH.

ER--HELLO, BIG DUDE. IT'S ME, BOG. ME THINK THIS NOT RIGHT TUNNEL. BOG MAKE WRONG TURN BACK THERE. **SAY,** WAIT MINUTE. MAYBE WE MAKE DEAL, *EH?*

DUDE IN CHAINS, *EH?* BOG BE EXPERT LOCK PICKER. FREE DUDE QUICK. **GOOD DEAL,** *EH?*

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?

THERE BE TREASURE UNDER TEMPLE. DUDE HELP BOG GET. OKAY?

OKAY.

YOU BE LOOSE IN NO TIME.

DON'T TELL ME, TELL THE **LOCK.** YOU'VE BEEN AT IT FOR AN HOUR.

HMPH! **BAD** LOCK.

HAND ME THAT ROCK.

I'LL HAVE A TRY AT IT.

GRAK GROKLE

LET'S GO. WHERE'S THE TREASURE?

BACK INTO TUNNEL.

I'D PREFER THE **DOOR.** BUT OUR BIG BLUE FRIEND IS OUT THERE--AND IT'S **BOLTED.**

THE TWO DESCENDED INTO A MAZE OF SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGEWAYS. AFTER SIX BLIND ALLEYS--

HERE!

NO! WE'VE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH THAT ONE. IT'S NO USE. I'M GOING TO FIND MY WAY OUT OF HERE.

BOG NOT GIVE UP. FIND **BIG** TREASURE.

LOOK. NOT TOO DARK. TREASURE VAULT IN THAT DIRECTION.

MORNING LIGHT EVEN SHINES DOWN HERE.

WAIT. HOW DID THESE **BONES** GET HERE?

OLD BONES. **VERY OLD.** NO PROBLEM.

ERK! SUBTERRANEAN **HYDRA!** ALL YOURS.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

BOG FREE DUDE. DUDE KILL HYDRA. **DEAL!**

YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT A **MONSTER.**

DO SOMETHING.

I AM. RUNNING!

YIPES! **DEAD END.**

I HOPE NOT.

IT'S COMING ON FAST. I NEED A WEAPON.

BOG HIDE. WHERE?

THIS ANCIENT BRONZE SPEAR WILL DO.

TOO MANY MOUTHS.

SNAP!

GROWL!

MAYBE HYDRA TOO MUCH FOR DUDE. *WAH!*

THUD!

KABLUNK

CRUNCH!

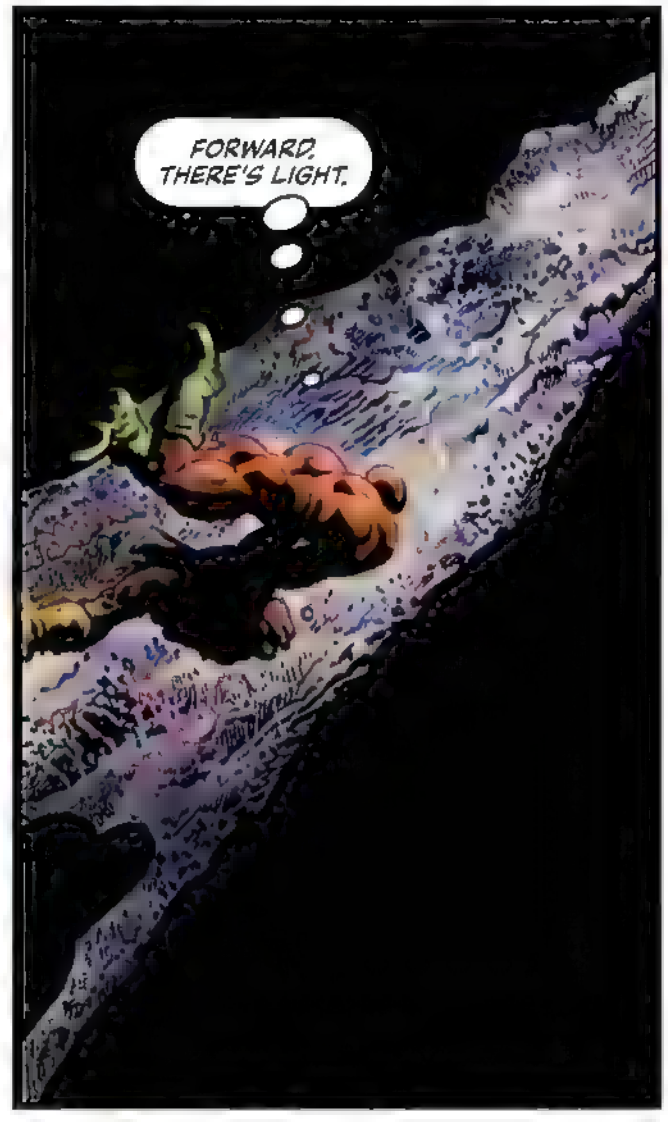
YAAH!

K-SPLASH!

NOW WHERE'D HE GO?

THERE.

CAN'T GO BACK.
GLUB-BLUB


FORWARD. THERE'S LIGHT.

ERRGH--
COUGH!

THERE'S YOUR FAMOUS DAMN TREASURE.

COUGH! BOG SICK.

BUT TRY AND GET IT.

WOW! GOLD, JEWELS.

WE CAN PROBABLY GET OUT THIS WAY.

NOT YET. BOG WANT TREASURE.

GOOD LUCK.

BANG BANG BANG

NONE OF THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR. THERE--A LIGHT ABOVE.

GOOD! THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CELL. BUT IS THAT RUFFIAN LIZARD NEARBY?

GONE! AND SIENNA, TOO. I DON'T THINK SHE MEANS TO RETURN. WHAT DID SHE HAVE IN MIND FOR ME? STARVATION IN THAT CELL?

HOLY DRAGONS! IT'S NOT BOLTED. SHE DIDN'T MEAN TO FINISH ME AFTER ALL. I'M SURE WE WERE DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP.

BUT WHY DID SHE LEAVE?

SHE KNEW MORE THAN SHE WANTED TO TELL. WELL, IF SHE THINKS I'M GIVING UP, SHE'S MISTAKEN.

I WILL CONTINUE MY QUEST FOR A SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE OF MY PAST, AND TO FIND THE MEANING OF MY EXISTENCE. NOW I CAN SEE SIENNA IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE EQUATION, HERSELF. THOSE STORIES WEREN'T JUST CONJURATIONS.

YO, GORNY! BOG'S FLYER. HE MUST BE A GOOD MASTER TO KEEP YOU WAITING AND RETURNING.

HEY, DUDE, WAIT FOR BOG.

NO GET TREASURE. MAYBE TRY AGAIN LATER. WOULDN'T LEAVE BOG BEHIND, EH?

FAINT ECHOES OF MY PAST CALL ME, BOG. I HEED THEM TO THE NORTH.

NOT ON GORNY, YOU DON'T!

WAIT. WE MAKE DEAL. DUDE RENT GORNY AND HIRE BOG AS GUIDE AND BODYGUARD. GOOD DEAL?

THE END...FOR NOW.

THE PRICE OF MEMORIES EPILOGUE

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

"The end . . . for now" are the last words in the last caption of the last published page of the saga of Den. Although they were written thirty years ago, the continuation of the story was never realized, and we don't know how the series would have wrapped up. However, Corben left us some hints in a brief description in the epilogue of *Den 3: Children of Fire:* "The radiation triggered a genetic change in Kil. She became a powerful ruler on this planet of violence. Mal and Pucca became mates and eluded Kil for a time. Their offspring challenged Kil's rule between bouts of madness. But those are other stories."

Those stories remained untold. However, Kil did indeed become the evil Red Queen. The offspring of Mal and Pucca is Elinorma, first introduced in this volume. Mal became "Uncle" Dan, and little David grew up to be the other Den. All of this retconning is very unusual, since by the time the characters met again in the *Neverwhere* animated film and the eponymous first graphic novel, they didn't recognize each other. Corben made these conflicting origins for his characters on purpose. He asked readers, "Did he (Den) come from contemporary Earth through an interdimensional device? Or, as this version suggests, is he a true alien delivered to this fantastic world, a fetus incubating in the egg and guarded by an Amazon warrior?"

The story started off very simply since it followed the stereotypical scenario of the Sword and Sandal movies that were very popular when Corben was a teenager. In them, a scantily clad hero, generally portrayed by an American bodybuilder, fought evil tyrants while two beautiful women, an innocent damsel in distress and a ruthless femme fatale, competed for his affections. That is the basic plot of *Den 1: Neverwhere.* But in the subsequent volumes, Corben ditched that straightforward premise and replaced it with a very complex puzzle.

For this chapter, Corben brought back almost all the significant players from the saga: both Dens and Kil play prominent roles. Pucca is also featured notably, as is the villainous Zeg and his sons Taug, Murk, and Scon. The first chapter, a direct continuation of *Den 4: Dreams and Alarums*, features Den's friends Zandor and Wyn, and the minor bad guy Buto. Even the enigmatic woman from the first Den story in *Grim Wit* #2 and her lizard reappear, and their colorful names are revealed: Sienna and Phthalo. The only important person missing is the Queen's doppelgänger, Kath.

In 1994, in the last answer to a reader's letter in *DenSaga* #4, Corben wrote, "At least you know there would be one more Den adventure in the future." Instead, a couple of years later Corben returned to do caricature versions of the characters in the satirical strip *Denz*, which was serialized in *Penthouse Comix*. Corben did not consider that story as part of the continuity, but merely a joke. Penned by his good friend Jan Strnad, it also gave readers some hints as to where Den's future could have gone. Strnad wrote:

"The saga of Den's exploits . . . lusty and brawling, brimming with magic, intrigue, horror and betrayal . . . spanned many generations and filled many exotic volumes. Now in his declining years, Den lives in a Neverwhere far different from the one he entered. Thanks to his magical Locnar, Den has brought peace and prosperity to his adoptive world."

Corben could not totally stop drawing Den, Kath, and the Queen. For the cover of the publication *15 Years of Heavy Metal* (1992), he featured Den and the Red Queen as they were seen in *Den 4: Dreams and Alarums*. And in *Heavy Metal* #163 (1996), he did a great digital painting featuring all three characters fighting for the Locnar, reminiscent of the ending of *Den 1: Neverwhere.* In 2013 he brought the characters back one last time—as zombies! On the cover of the *Comic Book Legal Defense Fund's Liberty Annual* special for that year, Den and the Queen stumble out of their respective tombs. That comic, reprinted in this book for the first time, is a satire that deals with a thinly veiled self-portrait of a cartoonist who can never let go of his characters.

He also teased a possible return to the character one last time with the saga of *Denaeus*, which appeared as a backstory in the series *Shadows on the Grave* (2016). First seen in an unpublished image titled "Denaeus in Hell" (2014), he was shown looking like Den, wearing only boots and a cape, but with only one arm, while fighting a monster. But Denaeus's self-contained story turned out not to be Den's after all. There are

some thematic parallels between the stories, but no overlapping locations or characters.

Through the years, Corben continued pondering about the meaning of the series and the reasons for its success. In perhaps his last in-depth interview in 2019, published by the scholarly French magazine *Les Cahiers de la BD*, he made one of his most substantial statements regarding Den. With his characteristic humility, he said: "I think the nudity and extreme sexuality in the Den series had more to do with a rebellious and hedonistic nature I was going through at the time. I wanted the character to be more heroic and more sexually frank than had been done before in comics. This also included a need to push the limits of the new found freedom of the underground comics. Apparently, the series became relatively successful just because it was so outrageous." He stated that he enjoyed drawing the series, but that he had some issues with the story. Affirming that in his view "There is still a lot of resistance to this kind of material" he concluded that "At this point I have no plans to return to the character."

We have seen in the previous volumes of this series how Corben kept experimenting with visual media in his image-making process. After doing a wide range of innovative and inventive techniques, he inevitably incorporated the computer. His first attempts at using software like Maya, Image Studio, Digital Darkroom and Adobe Photoshop appeared in the four-issue series *Horror in the Dark* (1991) and suffered from the very low image resolution possible at the time. The art looked pixelated or blurry, and he acknowledged these challenges in the letters page of *Horror in the Dark* #2. On the back cover of *Horror in the Dark* #3, he published one of his first successful attempts to adapt his old color separation technique into Adobe Photoshop. Two years later, Corben created the series *DenSaga*, which first presented the story in this volume. By that time technology had advanced, and the illustrations of *DenSaga* were in full color and much sharper. At that time, Adobe Photoshop was still in version 1.0, meaning it did not even have layers. It is astonishing what Corben could create with what now seems truly primitive technology.

The process he followed was a combination of old and new. He drew and rendered his figures in graphite pencil and black marker and then he colored them digitally and added computer-generated imagery. The results were startling. Mike Saenz's *Shatter* had been the first digitally rendered comic book just seven years before; it was a very interesting experiment, but extremely rough. *DenSaga* was on a totally different level graphically. 3D software at the time could be used to create geometric shapes fairly convincingly, but the figures had to be colored in Adobe Photoshop. *DenSaga* #1 (chapter 1 in this book) gave us the first truly visually satisfying sequential art experience created mostly with digitally generated or manipulated illustrations.

The computer became a bit of a double-edged sword. On *DenSaga* #3, Corben wrote: "Part of the delay is caused by this wonderful tool, the computer. With each image, it opens a wealth of creative possibilities; I'm not one to pass such conspicuous opportunities. Though more skill is gained with each job, I try to push the image a bit further. Unfortunately, this extra work doesn't always pay off. Being in control of all aspects of your work's publication means that there are more things that can go wrong and you are responsible for them." Although the format and paper of *DenSaga* were of high quality, the printing came out oversaturated and dark. In the nineties it was the responsibility of digital colorists to prepare the files for the printer, and it was tremendously challenging at first, given the technological limitations.

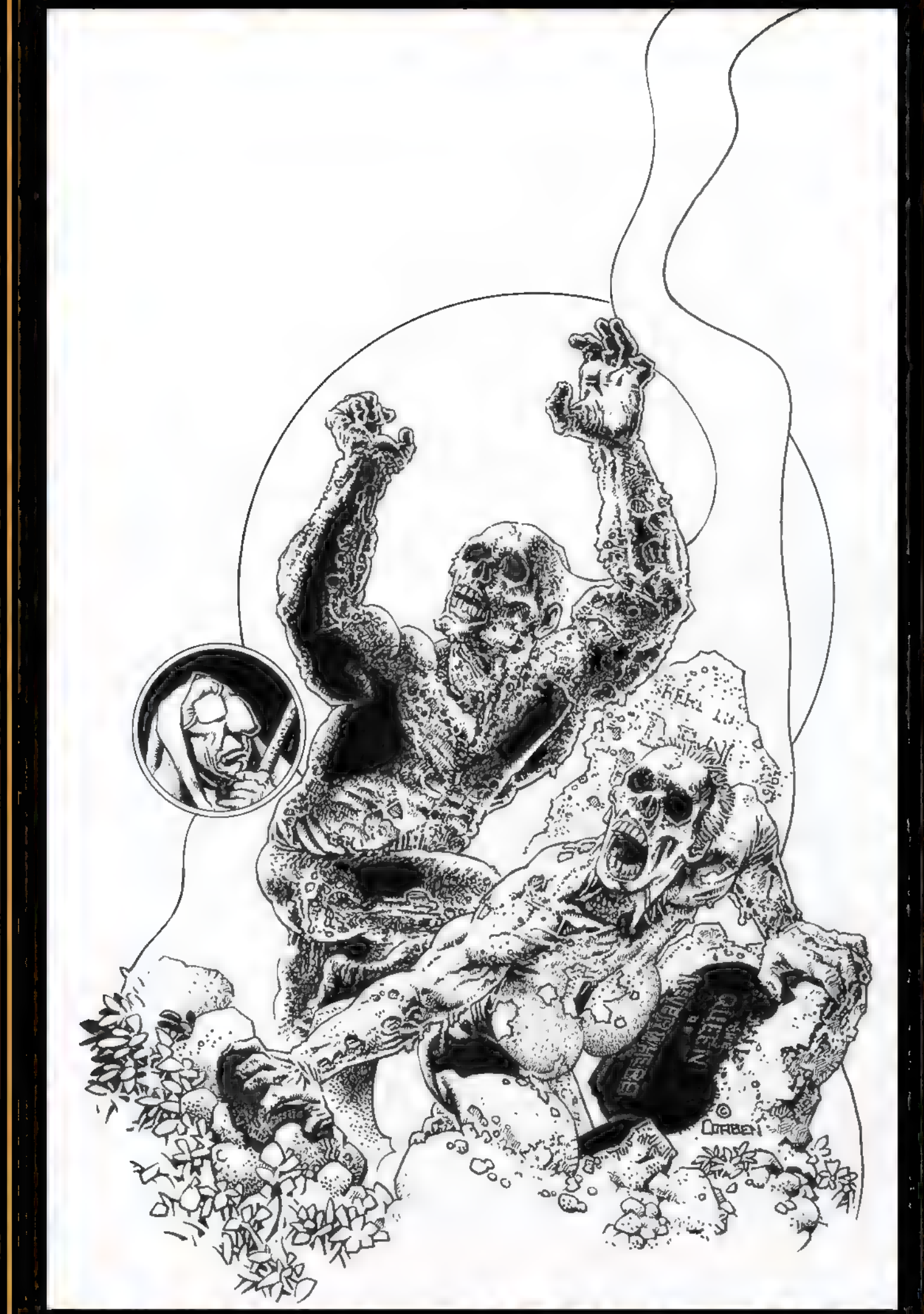
Den 5: The Price of Memories has never been collected in English. In Europe, it was reprinted in Germany by Carlsen Comics, in Holland by Pop Comics, and in France by Editions Toth. The French hardcover edition featured a short but great introduction by Moebius who always admired Corben and called him "the Mozart of comics." Fortunately, the original art pages are all in Corben's family's collection. They consist of drawings in Sharpie and Sakura Pigma Micron pens and are sometimes rendered in gray colored pencils. Blending the rendering from the originals with the original digital files yielded ideal results. We are presenting this restored version here for the first time. The value, saturation and hue of the colors have been adjusted and enhanced and lost details have been recovered. *Den 5: The Price of Memories* has never looked better.

In his personal notes, Corben mentioned two additional possible volumes: *Den: Loose Ends* (which may have been this story) and another with an intriguing title: *Den: A New Beginning*. If time had allowed, he might have shared these other "exotic volumes" which were in his dreams. But before he returned to Den, he had many other stories that he wanted to tell. At the time of his passing four years ago he had completed his last graphic novel, *Dimwood*. It's a fabulous Lovecraftian horror tale in the tradition of his previous stories like *Rat God*, and it will be the next entry to the Richard Corben Library.

José Villarrubia
Baltimore , May 1, 2024

"Denaues in Hell" (2014)

Unpublished Den drawing, 2004



Cover Line Art for *CBLDF Liberty Annual* (2013)
This and Next Six Pages: "Dun's Return," a Short Five-Page Story from *CBLDF Liberty Annual* (2013)

Unpublished Den drawing, 2004

HIYA, GANG. HERE'S A BIT OF A DOWNER FOR YA. THERE WAS THIS CARTOONIST, HARVEY CRAIG, WHO WAS TRYING TO BRING BACK ONE OF HIS OLD CHARACTERS.

HIS STUFF HAD NEVER BEEN REALLY SUCCESSFUL, BUT HE THOUGHT WITH A LOT OF HARD WORK, IT MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE. THEN THERE WAS DISTRICT ATTORNEY MCVEY...HE ***HATED*** HARVEY'S COMICS.

HE TRIED TO GET AN INJUNCTION AGAINST THE PLANNED COMIC, BUT A JUDGE RULED ***THAT*** UNCONSTITUTIONAL. SO THE D.A. HAD SOMETHING ELSE UP HIS SLEEVE...

DUN'S RETURN

BY RICHARD CORBEN

LETTERING BY NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

HERE WE ARE, SIR. IT'S REALLY OUT IN THE STICKS. MAY I HELP YOU WITH YOUR SUITCASE?

NO, OFFICER KELLY. I CAN MANAGE. I MAY BE A WHILE, IF YOU WANT TO SNOOZE A BIT. HOPEFULLY, I CAN CONVINCE HIM TO CHANGE HIS PLANS.

"WITH DETERMINATION, THE BIG MAN TRUDGED UP THE LONG STAIRWAY.

"PAUSING A MOMENT ON THE PORCH, HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND KNOCKED."

WHO--? OH, IT'S YOU. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I JUST WANT TO TALK TO YOU. IT WON'T TAKE LONG.

DUN'S RETURN

OKAY. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY?

YOU LIVE *AND* WORK IN THIS DUMP...?

DUN'S RETURN

I HOPE I CAN CONVINCE YOU TO CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT YOUR...*UH*...*PROJECT.*

WHAT THE HELL IS *THAT?*

IT'S THE ART FOR MY PROMOTIONAL POSTER. LOOK, THE JUDGE SAID I COULD GO AHEAD, AND I INTEND TO. IT'S MY RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH.

THIS IS *CRAP!*

HEY! *STOP!*

RRIP!

IT TOOK ME A *WEEK* TO DRAW THIS. *WHY* IN HELL DID YOU TEAR IT UP?

I COULD *SUE* YOU, YOU ASSHOLE!

SIMMER DOWN, CREEP!

I'VE GOT SOME PRESENTS FOR YOU. JUST TO SHOW THERE'S NO HARD FEELINGS.

THERE. IT'S YOUR VERY OWN *BOMB* AND *DRUG* MAKING FACTORY. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I DON'T GET IT. I DON'T USE THIS STUFF.

BUT IT IS NEEDED. AND YOU'LL NEED THIS, TOO. *HERE!*

A GUN! WHY?

DON'T TRY TO FIRE IT. I FIXED IT.

BUT THIS ONE WORKS.

YOU ARE A DESPERATE TERRORIST. I'LL HAVE TO KILL YOU--

NO! I--!

--IN SELF DEFENSE.

BAM!

HARVEY, WHAT'S GOING ON?

AAAAH!

AND YOUR FELLOW CONSPIRATORS.

BAM! BAM!

HERE'S A LITTLE ONE FOR YOU, DEAR.

SIR! I HEARD SHOOTING. ARE YOU ALL *RIGHT?*

KELLY, NOT ONLY WAS HE A *SMUT PEDDLER,* BUT A *DRUG-DEALING TERRORIST!* THEY WENT FOR THEIR GUNS. I HAD NO CHOICE.

OH MY GOD! BUT--GOOD RIDDANCE.

The Daily Chronicle

HERO D. A. WIPES OUT DRUG-PORN GANG!

THWARTS BOMB ATTEMPT

THIS LITTLE PECCADILLO TURNED OUT PRETTY GOOD FOR THE D.A. APPARENTLY HE GOT AWAY WITH IT...AND THE CRAIGS ENDED UP OUT *HERE.*

"BUT THEY DIDN'T REST EASY.

"LATER, AT THE D.A.'S ESTATE..."

EEYAGHH!

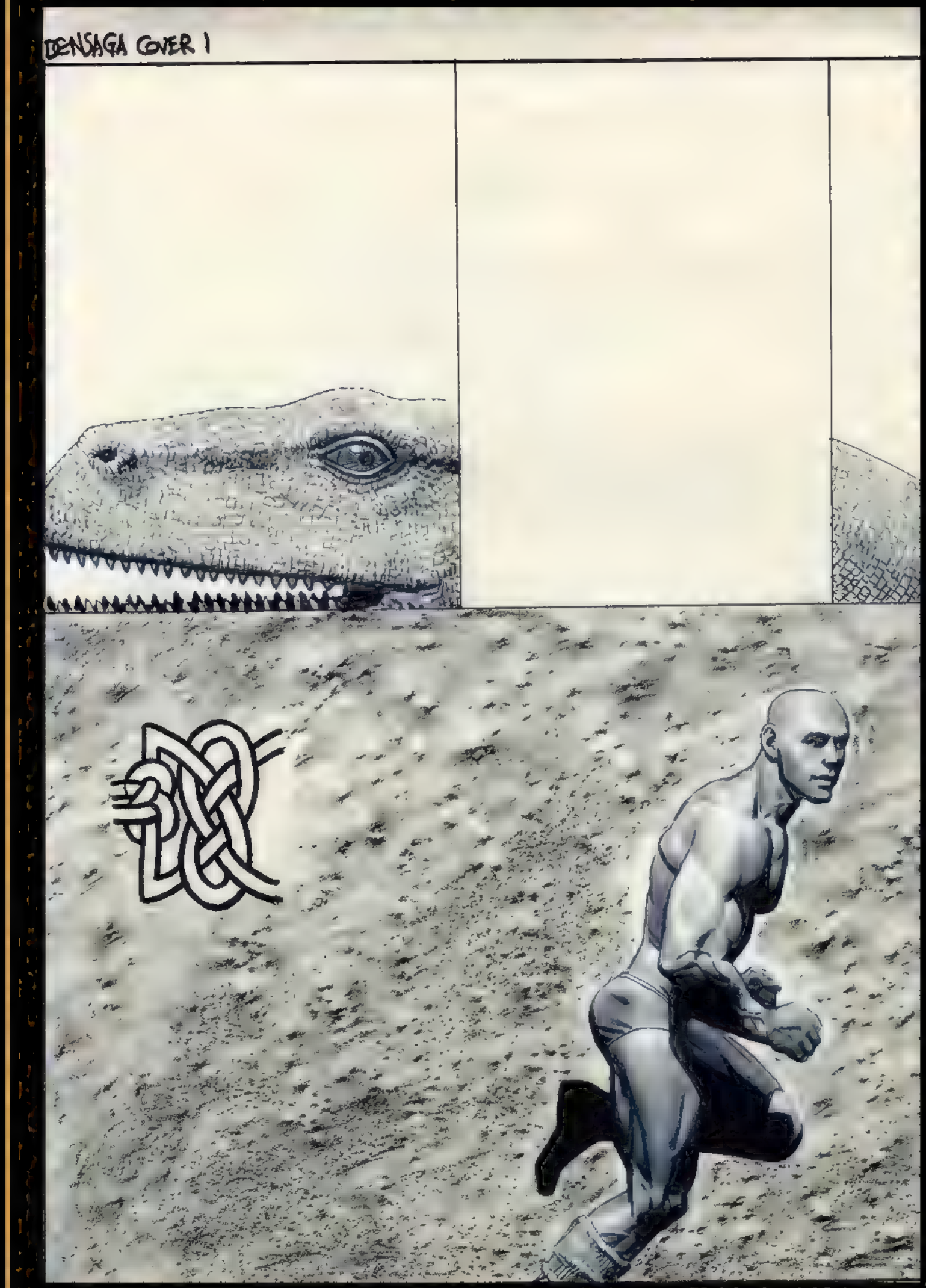
NOW THAT'S WHAT I LIKE. *REVENGE OF THE DEAD,* JUST LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS OF COMICS. THAT'S *REAL* JUSTICE.

Den COVER GALLERY

Cover for *DenSaga* #1 (1992)

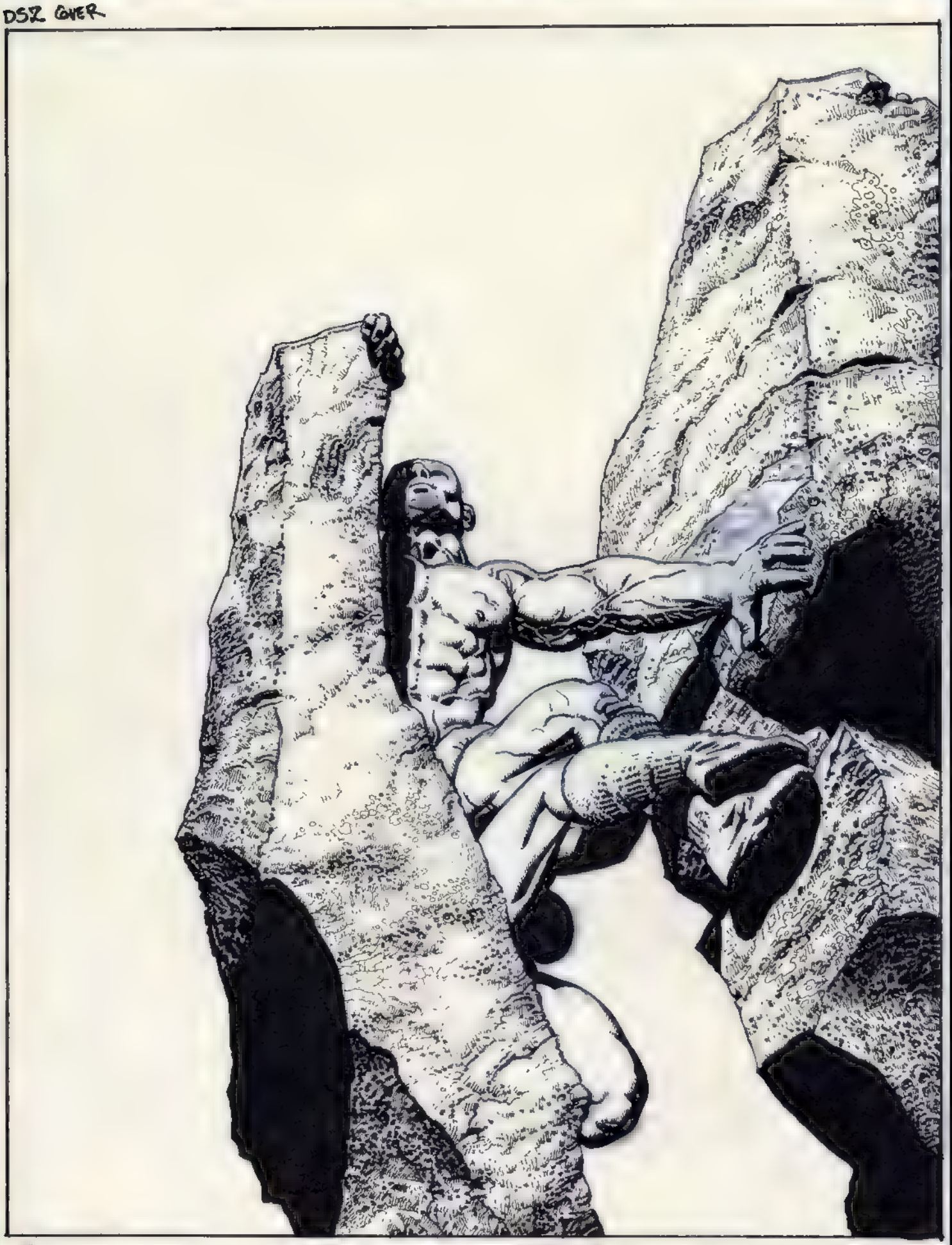
Cover for *DenSaga* #4 (1994)

"Den and Boonthas," *Famous Monsters Gallery: Dark Arts* #1 (2011)



Cover Line Art for *DenSaga* #1

DS2 COVER



Cover Line Art for *DenSaga* #2

Sagard the Barbarian Gamebook #2. (Archway, 1985.) Corben repurposed the Hydra for the cover of *DenSaga* #4.

HI COMIC WEIRDOS! YES IT'S ME, GURGY TATE, RETURNED FROM THE MOLDY GRAVE OF THE UNDERGROUND HORROR COMICS. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE HAD ANYONE TO TELL MY STORIES TO... EXCEPTIN' OL' FANTAGOR AND HORRILOR. AND THEY DON'T COUNT 'CAUSE THEY KEEP TRYIN' TO WASTE MY TIME TELLIN' ME THEIR STORIES. I'VE GOT THREE LITTLE GOODIES FOR YA THAT YOU'LL JUST LOVE!

Gurgy Tate Illustration from the Introduction to *Richard Corben's Funny Book.*

HI' MY NAME IS FANTAGOR! WHAT'S YOURS? . ?
THIS IS WHERE I LIVE WITH MY BROTHER, UK! HE'S NOT TOO SMART HE FOLLOWS ME EVER WHERE . WE'RE IN SEPERBULL . . . COME ON IN OUTTA THAT RADIO ACTIVE RAIN AN' I'LL TELL YA SOME STORIES UK WON'T HURTCHA
FANTAGOR 1 © 1970 Richard V Corben
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Fantagor and Uk Illustrations from the Introduction to *Fantagor* #1.

NOTES FROM NEVERWHERE

WHERE WE'VE BEEN:

IT'S BEEN OVER A YEAR SINCE I WROTE THE LAST EDITORIAL FOR HORROR IN THE DARK 4, OUR LAST COMIC SERIES. I WAS MOANING AND WHINING ABOUT THE COMIC'S DEMISE AND THE UNCARING MARKET. IN THE INTERVAL, FANTAGOR CONCENTRATED ON PUBLISHING OUR COLLECTED EDITIONS. BEFORE 1992, WE TOOK PRIDE IN OUR REPUTATION FOR ON-TIME PUBLISHING. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, THAT REPUTATION COLLAPSED INTO A HIDEOUS MESS OF LATENESS. A CO-PUBLISHER'S BUSINESS FAILED, AND A PRINTER BROKER RIPPED US OFF, ARE AMONG OUR GORY EXCUSES. THANK GOD FOR DONA FOR GETTING OUR MONEY BACK.

WE HOPED WITH DENSAGA THOSE PROBLEMS OF LATENESS WERE FINISHED, BUT NO, THINGS CAN'T SEEM TO GET ORGANIZED BETWEEN CO-PUBLISHERS. ORIGINALLY, DENSAGA WAS TO APPEAR IN SEPTEMBER, DECEMBER, MARCH AND JUNE; BUT, SOMEHOW THE SOLICITATIONS TO THE DISTRIBUTOR WEREN'T MADE. SAME PROBLEM WITH THE SECOND (THIS ONE) ISSUE. NOW, WE THINK DENSAGA 2 WILL BE IN THE COMIC SHOPS IN JUNE, 3 IN JULY AND 4 IN OCTOBER. IF YOU ARE A SUBSCRIBER, YOU MIGHT BE READING THIS IN MARCH, WE HOPE! ENOUGH OF THIS CONFUSION. HERE'S SOME LETTERS.

DEAR CORBENS,

ASTOUNDING! AN IMPRESSIVELY UNIQUE MELDING OF ART AND COMPUTER GRAPHICS WIZARDRY. DEN HAS NEVER SEEMED SO HUMAN OR REAL. YET, DECEPTIVELY SO - I HAVE NO DOUBT WHAT-SO-EVER DENSAGA ESTABLISHED A HALLMARK.

PERHAPS THE WONDER AND FREEDOM LOST, WHICH SOME REVIEWERS PLACED ON YOUR WORK (AFTER YOUR DISEMBARKMENT FROM THE UNDERGROUNDS), WAS PREMATURE.

I REMIND MYSELF THIS IS JUST THE FIRST ISSUE.

TAKE CARE,

D. GARZA
DENVER, CO

DEAR RICHARD,

WHAT CAN I SAY BUT YOU'RE AWESOME! THE COLLECTED DEN BOOKS YOU DID THIS SUMMER WERE WONDERFUL. THEY WERE ALSO SMART IN HELPING NEW FANS SEEK YOU OUT. THE NEW ADDED PAGES MADE THE BOOKS WORTH HAVING ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF US LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE THE ORIGINAL SERIES. YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY WITH YOUR COMPUTER SKILLS IN A SHORT TIME. THE NEW COMPUTER IMAGES HAD THE SAME GREAT CHARACTERISTICS ONE EXPECTS FROM YOU, EXCELLENT HUMAN FORM AND RICH. FULL COLORS ALL RENDERED IN THE CORBEN STYLE., WHICH MADE A GREAT TRANSITION INTO THE NEW COMPUTER MEDIA. YOU'VE DEFINITELY IMPROVED, SOMETHING RARE IN TODAY'S COMICS

I CAN ONLY HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE WITH THIS HIGH LEVEL OF WORK IN **DENSAGA**. IT LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE BRINGING ALL THE RIGHT ELEMENTS TOGETHER TO FORM THE PERFECT BOOK, WITHOUT KILLING YOURSELF. I BELIEVE A QUARTERLY PUBLISHED, MAGAZINE SIZE, COLOR COMPUTER ART SERIES IS RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT TO BE (OR AT LEAST WHERE I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU). AND GOD BLESS KEVIN EASTMAN AND **TUNDRA PUBLISHING** FOR SUPPORTING WHAT I BELIEVE WILL BE YOUR BIGGEST AND BEST PROJECT EVER. I CAN'T WAIT

BEST WISHES,

PHILLIP MACK
CHARLOTTE, NC

GREETINGS D & R CORBEN,

OF **DENSAGA #1**

I HAVE NOT YET PUT IT DOWN. ARTWISE, THE COMPUTERIZATION OF YOUR ARTWORK IS, AT THE LEAST, STAGGERING. I FEEL YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELF FROM YOUR ORIGINAL BEGINNINGS WITH AIRBRUSH.
YOU HAVE RECREATED YOURSELF, RICHARD CORBEN, MARK 2

PEACE,

MAXWELL CONTON
BRONX, NY

HI THERE,

THIS SATURDAY, I GOT THE NEW **DENSAGA** FROM **FANTAGOR/TUNDRA**. I WAS TOTALLY BLOWN AWAY BY IT. RICHARD CORBEN HAS REALLY OUTDONE HIMSELF THIS TIME! THE ART IS SUPERB. JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THE IMAGE OF THE FIST MEETING WITH THE INDIAN GIRL. THE FINESSE OF THE DETAILED BUILDING SHE'S STANDING ON, THE UNBELIEVABLE REALITY OF THE BLINKING OF HER GOLDEN CROWN, THE ABSENCE OF "FALSE SHADOWS" COVERING HER PRIVATE PARTS.
EVERY PICTURE IS MADE WITH THE UTMOST CARE AND LOVING.

I AM SO VERY GLAD THAT **FANTAGOR** AND **TUNDRA** HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER TO PUBLISH THE WORK OF SUCH A UNIQUE ARTIST. I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT THIS SERIES WILL SELL IN HUGE NUMBERS SO THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT OUR MONTHLY CORBEN INJECTION!

TAKE CARE,

JEROEN BEYNON
HOLLAND

NO FOLKS! I DIDN'T WRITE THESE LETTERS TO MYSELF, AND I DIDN'T PAY SIMON REVELSTROKE TO WRITE THEM EITHER. THE RESPONSE IS NINETY PERCENT APPROVAL. THE RECEPTION IS VERY GRATIFYING. WHAT ABOUT THAT OTHER TEN PERCENT? I WOULD HAVE PRINTED THAT HIGHLY CRITICAL LETTER JUST FOR EDITORIAL CONTRAST, EXCEPT THE WRITER DIDN'T WANT HIS LETTER PUBLISHED.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN,

I JUST RECEIVED THE FIRST ISSUE OF **DENSAGA** AND I AM PLEASED WITH THE QUALITY OF THE ENTIRE BOOK. I AM GLAD YOU DECIDED TO GO WITH THE LARGER MAGAZINE FORMAT. THE LARGER PANELS MAKE IT EASIER AND MORE PLEASURABLE TO READ AND TAKE IN THE BREATH TAKING

LETTERS CONTINUED ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER.

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Printed in Canada

Front letters page from *DenSaga #2*

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM THE INSIDE FRONT COVER.

ARTWORK. DON'T LET ANYONE GIVE YOU ANY FLAK ABOUT THE COVER PRICE EITHER. FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN IN THE COMIC SHOPS, $4.95 IS A FAIR PRICE TO PAY FOR THIS LEVEL OF QUALITY

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT PRODUCING AN INSTRUCTIONAL HOW-TO-DRAW AND PAINT BOOK. I WOULD LOVE TO SEE A STEP BY STEP PROCESS OF SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE DONE. OR MAYBE A HOW-TO VIDEO MIGHT EVEN DO THE TRICK. IT MAY MAKE YOUR WORK MORE COMMERCIAL AND BROADEN THE POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

I MISS YOUR HORROR HOSTS. IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF BRINGING BACK **FANTAGOR** AND THE REST OF THE OLD GANG. THAT KIND OF STORY TELLING IS WHAT DREW ME INTO COMICS AND STILL IS A FAVORITE OF MINE TO THIS DAY. IT ALSO WOULD BE FUN TO HAVE A LIMITED NUMBER OF DIE-CAST STATUETTES MADE UP OF THESE CHARACTERS. I AM SURE THAT YOU HAVE ENOUGH DEVOTED FANS THAT THESE WOULD SELL OUT PROMPTLY. I HAVE SEEN A COMMEMORATIVE STATUE OF **SUPERMAN** ADVERTISED FOR $700.00. THAT SHOULD GIVE YOU A ROUGH IDEA OF WHAT FANS OUT THERE ARE WILLING TO PAY

SINCERELY,

DARREN FEHST

WE'RE GLAD YOU FEEL $4.95 IS A FAIR PRICE. WHEN FANTAGOR PRESS DECIDED TO GO TO A LARGER FORMAT, THE PRICE INCREASE WAS A SERIOUS CONCERN FOR US.

I DON'T THINK A "HOW TO" VIDEO FROM CORBEN WOULD BE CURRENT VERY LONG. FOR INSTANCE, THE TWO STORIES IN DENSAGA UTILIZED TWO DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES. SIMILARLY, THE PRODUCTION IN THIS ISSUE ALSO USED DIFFERENT VARIATIONS.

RICH,

I'M NOT MUCH ON COMPUTER GRAPHICS BUT **DENSAGA 1** LOOKED REALLY GOOD. THE CLARK ASHTON SMITH STORY WAS ADAPTED EFFECTIVELY AND I LIKED THE NEW KIND OF STIPPLING YOU USED IN THE STORY. NO ONE CAN COLOR COMICS LIKE RICH CORBEN. BUT STAN DRESSER DID A GREAT JOB

A FAN,

RUSSELL BARNES
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

I'M AFRAID WE HAD ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS WITH THE FILM MAKING ON THE SEED FROM THE SEPULCHER, NONE OF WHICH WAS STAN'S FAULT. SOME VALUABLE LESSONS WERE LEARNED THOUGH.

DEAR FANTAGOR PRESS,

CORBEN'S BACK (AND BETTER THAN EVER!). I JUST GOT **DENSAGA** #1 TODAY, AND IT LOOKS GREAT! IT LOOKS AS IF THE HELP OF **TUNDRA** IS PAYING OFF. THE EXCELLENT PRINTING SHOWCASES CORBEN'S ART. HE HASN'T LOOKED THIS GOOD IN YEARS! ONE QUESTION, I WAS WONDERING TO WHAT EXTENT DID RICH USE A COMPUTER IN THE MAKING OF THIS COMIC. I KNOW IT WAS USED IN THE **SEED FROM THE SEPULCHER** (AS THE VARIOUS LITTLE DOTS ATTEST TO), AN EFFECT THAT I PERSONALLY DID NOT LIKE DID YOU USE THE COMPUTER FOR COLORING, LINE DRAWING, WHAT? I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW, AND I SUSPECT MANY OTHER FANS WOULD TOO. DON'T GET ME WRONG. I LOVED THE FIRST CHAPTER OF **DENSAGA**. IT LOOKED GREAT. I'M JUST CURIOUS. IT SEEMS AS IF SOME OF THE COLORING WAS DONE BY COMPUTER, AND IN CERTAIN PLACES, THE LINE SEEMS "SQUIGGLY" LIKE A COMPUTER WAS INVOLVED THE HUGE ONE PANEL PAGE WITH THE DRAGON, AND SEVERAL PANELS, SEEM TO HAVE A COMPUTER-LIKE EFFECT OVERALL, THO, THIS WAS A SMASHING SUCCESS. THIS IS THE KIND OF CORBEN I LIKE TO SEE. STRONG COLORS. INVENTIVE SETTINGS AND CHARACTERS, AND CORBEN'S TRADEMARK WEIRD OTHER WORLD FEEL. GREAT STUFF. IT REALLY WARMS MY HEART TO SEE CORBEN KICKING ASS AGAIN

I HAD HOPED THAT THE ASSOCIATION WITH **TUNDRA** WOULD HELP WITH BETTER PRINTING, AND IT SEEMS IT HAS. CAN'T WAIT FOR #2.

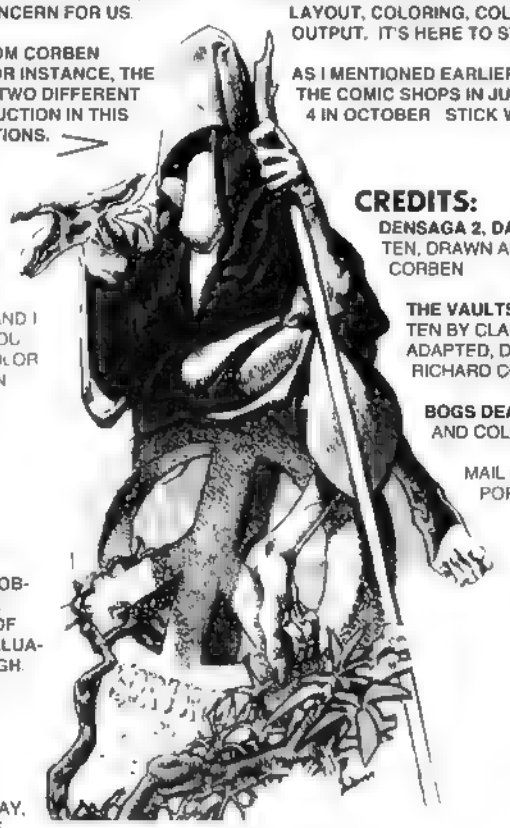
SINCERELY,

JOHN KELLY
PRINCETON, NJ

THE COMPUTER IS A VALUABLE TOOL AND I WILL CONTINUE TO USE IT TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT EFFECTS. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, I HAVE OVER FORTY YEARS EXPERIENCE DRAWING ON PAPER. THE COMPUTER DOESN'T SUPERSEDE OR CANCEL THESE HARD GAINED SKILLS.

COMPUTER DESKTOP PUBLISHING HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED THE WAY WE PRODUCE COMICS AND BOOKS. IT'S PUT VARIOUS TECHNICAL PROCEDURES UNDER THE EDITORS DIRECT CONTROL SUCH AS WRITING, LETTERING, LAYOUT, COLORING, COLOR SEPARATION AND FILM OUTPUT. IT'S HERE TO STAY.

AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, THIS ISSUE SHOULD BE IN THE COMIC SHOPS IN JUNE. NUMBER 3, IN JULY AND 4 IN OCTOBER. STICK WITH US!



CREDITS:

DENSAGA 2, DAYS ON HEAVEN WAS WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN

THE VAULTS OF YOH VOMBIS WAS WRITTEN BY CLARK ASHTON SMITH AND ADAPTED, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN

BOGS DEAL WAS WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

Back letters page from *DenSaga* #2. The character illustrated is Gurgy Tate, the horror host of Corben's stories in *Skull Comics* and Fantagor. The figure comes from the introduction to *Richard Corben's Funny Book*.

NOTES FROM NEVERWHERE

A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR SCHEDULING.

WE'VE BEEN LATE ON ALMOST EVERYTHING WE'VE PUBLISHED FOR THE LAST YEAR OR TWO. SOMEHOW I DON'T SEE THIS SITUATION CHANGING. WHY? I GUESS I'M A LATE SORT OF GUY. THIS WASN'T ALWAYS THE CASE. WE WERE USUALLY ON TIME FOR THE YEARS AT CALVIN, WARREN, HEAVY METAL, FREELANCE COVERS, AND OUR EARLIER INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING WITH FANTAGOR. RECENTLY, THOUGH, IT SEEMS THE COSTS OF BEING ON TIME ARE GREATER (FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL), AND THE REWARDS ARE REALLY AN ILLUSION. THE REASONS FOR BEING LATE ARE VARIED AND INCLUDE ACCEPTING OUTSIDE JOBS, SUCH AS THE [illegible] STRIP, TAKING A VERY SHORT VACATION (OUR FIRST IN ABOUT FIVE YEARS) AND SOME OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH WILL NOT BE DETAILED HERE. BUT THE GREATEST HINDRANCE AGAINST A QUICK TURN AROUND OF CORBEN STORIES AND ART IS MY PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY WHICH IS "WHAT WAS GOOD ENOUGH BEFORE IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH THIS TIME" OR,"I JUST CAN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE". IN OTHER WORDS, MAKE THE IMAGE AS REAL AND RICH AS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE TIME AND SPACE ALLOWED DISDAINING ALL STYLIZATIONS AND SHORTCUTS. WHILE DRAWING, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE SETTING AND CHARACTERS SHOULD BE COMPLETELY DETAILED AND RENDERED. AFTERWARD, I REALIZE THIS IS A MISTAKE AND MUCH OF THE EXCESSIVE AND BUSY DETAIL MUST BE OBLITERATED OR AT LEAST MUTED.

PART OF THE DELAY IS CAUSED BY THAT WONDERFUL TOOL, THE COMPUTER. WITH EACH IMAGE, IT OPENS A WEALTH OF CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES; I'M NOT ONE TO PASS UP SUCH CONSPICUOUS OPPORTUNITIES. THOUGH MORE SKILL IS GAINED WITH EACH JOB, I TRY TO PUSH THE IMAGE A BIT FARTHER. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS EXTRA WORK DOESN'T ALWAYS PAY OFF. BEING IN CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR ARTWORK'S PUBLICATION MEANS THERE ARE MORE THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG AND YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. FOR INSTANCE, YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT THE **MOLA THE MOLE** PREVIEW IN **HEAVY METAL** (JULY ISSUE) APPEARED DARK AND BROWN. AT MY DIRECTION, THE FILMS WERE MADE FOR THIS BOOK (**DENSAGA**), WITH THIS PAPER, AND IN THE COMPANY OF OTHER FILMS PRODUCED IN AN IDENTICAL WAY. DUPLICATES WERE MADE FOR THE **HEAVY METAL** MAGAZINE, A DIFFERENT PAPER, DIFFERENT PRESS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, TO BE PRINTED BY A DIFFERENT PRESSMAN WHO SET THE RUN TO ACCOMMODATE THE MAJORITY OF **HEAVY METAL**'S LIGHTER PAGES, NOT MY MEASLY FOUR PAGES ENGRAVED TO A DEEPER INTENSITY. HENCE, MOST OF THE MAGAZINE LOOKED OKAY EXCEPT MY PAGES WHICH WERE TOO DARK.

SO TO GET BACK TO THE SUBJECT AND GET BACK ON SCHEDULE, PERHAPS WHAT I NEED IS TO CONTROL ALL THIS ARTISTIC PLAYING WITH SOME SOUND BUSINESS DISCIPLINE. HOPEFULLY, I CAN STEER **DENSAGA** IN THIS DIRECTION AND NOT BE TOO LATE.. EXCEPT FOR THOSE OTHER PROJECTS TO BE WORKED IN.

BUT NOW FOR SOME LETTERS·

DEAR RICHARD,

UNLIKE YOUR OTHER **DEN** SERIES, IT WAS NICE TO SEE THAT ONLY A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME HAD PASSED SINCE THE EVENTS OF THE LAST STORY LINE. I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE BUTO AGAIN AND I ENJOYED HIS DEMISE. ALTHOUGH HE DESERVED A SLOWER DEATH, HE GOT WHAT HE DESERVED IN TRUE "DEN" FASHION. WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT YOU'D FURTHER EXPLORE THE INDIAN PRINCESS AFTER TWENTY YEARS? (COME TO THINK OF IT, '93 SHOULD BE **DEN**'S 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY PUBLISHING-WISE, '73 - '93?) USING THE MAP IN **MUVOVUM** AND PLOTTING THE AREA OF DEN'S ARRIVAL SITE AGAINST HIS PRESENT LOCATION. IT'S SAFE TO SAY SHE AND HER SCALY FRIEND HAVE RELOCATED OVER THE YEARS.

I CAN ONLY HOPE WITH THE QUARTERLY PUBLISHING, THE QUALITY OF THE WORK WILL STAY THE SAME. IT'S ALSO HOPEFUL THAT FUTURE SERIES CAN FOLLOW BACK TO BACK WITH **DENSAGA**. LIKE YOUR FIRST SERIES, I ENJOY AN ALL CORBEN FORMAT. I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT'S NEXT IN DEN'S ADVENTURE. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

BEST WISHES.

PHILLIP MACK
CHARLOTTE NC

DEAR RICHARD,

"OVER AND UNDER AND BACK AGAIN", WAS THE PHRASE THAT CAME TO MIND AFTER READING **DENSAGA #2**. I WAS GLAD TO GET MY CORBEN "FIX" IN EARLY APRIL AND NOT JULY (I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE HELD OUT). OF COURSE, THE ART WAS NOTHING SHORT OF PHENOMENAL. I SEE YOU'RE BEING MORE SELECTIVE WITH THE COMPUTER TO REALLY PUSH ITS RENDERED EFFECTS OUT AT THE READER (THE FLYING SEQUENCES WERE GREAT.)

THINGS HAVE REALLY HEATED UP ON DEN'S QUEST. I WAS COMPLETELY THROWN BY THE SECOND DEN ORIGIN AND THE **CHILDREN OF FIRE** TIE-IN. PURE GENIUS! ALL OF THIS TIME, I CONSIDERED **C.O.F.** A SEPARATE BUT RELATED SERIES THAT WOULD LINK UP TO DEN LATER IN SOME SMALL, CASUAL WAY (NOT!!)

I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE WRITINGS OF CLARK ASHTON SMITH BUT YOUR IMAGES MAKE HIS WORK ENJOYABLE. HIS STYLE OF STORYTELLING SEEMS TO FIT WELL INTO THE "CORBEN VEIN", WHICH IS WHY I THINK THEY WORK SO WELL. I WAS ACTUALLY SCARED READING **THE VAULTS OF YOH VOMBIS**, SOMETHING "MAINSTREAM" HORROR COMICS CAN'T SEEM TO DO. I'M ALSO LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR INTERPRETATION OF RAY BRADBURY'S **A SOUND OF THUNDER** (MORE CORBEN-STYLE DINOSAUR ACTION.)

BOG'S DEAL WAS THE ICING ON THE CAKE. IT WAS A NICE CHANGE OF PACE TO SEE DEN IN ANOTHER CONTEXT OTHER THAN THE BUSINESS AT HAND. THE STORY ALSO GAVE MORE INSIGHT TO HIS SURROUNDINGS AND STATE OF MIND (ESPECIALLY CONCERNING THE NAR STONES). ENDING WITH A DEN "SIDE STORY" WAS VERY CLEVER AND GAVE THE BOOK A GOOD COHESIVE FEEL TO IT. THE COMEDY RELIEF DIDN'T HURT EITHER. GOOD JOB.

BEST WISHES

PHILLIP MACK
CHARLOTTE NC

LETTERS CONTINUED ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER.

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Front letters page from *DenSaga* #3

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM THE INSIDE FRONT COVER.

DEAR CORBENS,

ON THIS APRIL 10TH, I RECEIVED **DENSAGA #2**. ALL I CAN SAY ABOUT IT IS "WOW"! I AM ALSO GLAD THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE THOSE DULL BORDERS ON THE COVERS ANYMORE. I SUPPOSE THAT WHEN IT IS MAGAZINE SIZE, IT IS GENERALLY NOT A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE BORDERS ANYWAY

WELL, ONTO THE CONTENTS INSIDE. THE EVENTS IN NEVERWHERE SEEM TO BE TAKING AN INTERESTING TURN. EVEN THE DEAF, DUMB AND BLIND SHOULD KNOW BY NOW THAT KIL IS BASICALLY THE RED QUEEN. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS? WILL MAL BE EVENTUALLY REINCARNATED AS UNCLE DAN? THAN WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE LITTLE INFANT? WILL HE BECOME DEN? ALSO, WHAT ABOUT MAL AND PUCCA'S CHILD. WHAT HAPPENS TO IT? THINGS ARE TAKING AN INTERESTING TURN INDEED!

THE SECOND FEATURE, **THE VAULTS OF YOH VOMBIS**, WAS ALSO VERY NICE I LIKED IT A LOT BETTER THAN **SEED FROM THE SEPULCHER**. **YOH VOMBIS** WAS A TYPICAL CORBEN FEAST ABOUT FOOLISH ADVENTURERS GOING INTO PLACES WHERE THEY SHOULD NOT BE. I HOPE THAT YOU CONTINUE TO PUT AT LEAST ONE SUCH HORROR FEATURE IN EVERY MAGAZINE

BOG'S DEAL I HAD ALREADY READ IN **HEAVY METAL**. I FEEL THAT THE COLORS SEEMED MUCH MORE INTENSE WHEN IT APPEARED IN **HEAVY METAL**.

FINALLY ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER WHERE THE LETTERS ARE PRINTED, I REALLY LIKED THE DRAWING OF THAT GUY WITH THE PHALLIC NOSE. NOW DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT IS NOT THAT I LIKE THE DRAWING BECAUSE THE GUY HAS A PHALLIC NOSE. IT IS JUST THAT I REALLY LOVE CORBEN'S PEN & INK DRAWINGS. SIMILARLY, THERE WAS ALSO SUCH A DRAWING IN THE ART BOOK THAT I REALLY LIKED. I ALSO LOVED THE LAST ISSUE OF **HORROR IN THE DARK** SINCE EVERYTHING IN IT LOOKED BASICALLY LIKE LINE DRAWINGS.

IN CONCLUSION, I'D LIKE TO WISH **FANTAGOR** CONTINUED SUCCESS AND STABILITY

SINCERELY,

BRETT PEEPLES
LAS VEGAS NV

DEAR **FANTAGOR**,

ENCLOSED FOR YOUR INSPECTION, MY THOUGHTS ON **DENSAGA #2**:

DAYS ON HEAVEN WAS OVERALL A GOOD CHAPTER THERE WERE MOMENTS OF CHOPPY NARRATIVE SOMETIMES MAKING THE STORY LINE AND ACTION A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW. FORTUNATELY CORBEN'S TRADEMARK ARTWORK, ODD ASSORTMENT OF CHARACTERS, AND UNUSUALLY VIBRANT COLORS MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR ANY SLIGHT PROBLEMS I MIGHT HAVE

OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO ME, THE FLOATING CASTLE ON PAGE THREE, THE ACTION-FILLED PAGE FOUR, AND AGAIN THE WEIRD CORBEN CHARACTERS. CORBEN'S CHARACTERS ALWAYS SEEM TO HAVE PERSONALITY AND DEPTH, EVEN THE MOST RADIATION-DOSED MUTANT. **THE VAULTS OF YOH VOMBIS** WAS STARTLING. CORBEN'S ATTENTION TO TINY DETAILS ALWAYS PAYS OFF FROM THE SKIN TONES OF THE NATIVE GUIDES TO THE HIEROGLYPHICS ON THE WALLS OF YOH VOMBIS. OVERALL, THE ADAPTION WAS ATMOSPHERIC AND CREEPY, JUST WHAT ASHTON SMITH WOULD HAVE WANTED. I AM ENJOYING CORBEN'S ADAPTIONS OF HIS STORIES- A GOOD BLEND, ASHTON SMITH'S MOODY STORIES, ALONG WITH CORBEN'S GREAT ARTWORK. I ENJOY IT WHEN **FANTAGOR** GATHERS CORBEN'S STORIES FROM OTHER SOURCES SO I WAS GLAD TO SEE **BOG'S DEAL** AGAIN. FOR FANS WHO MAY HAVE MISSED THIS STORY WHEN IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN **HEAVY METAL**, THIS IS AN ADDED BONUS; BRAVO. CORBEN HAS ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL AND STRIKING VISIONS TO EVER APPEAR IN COMICS. I APPLAUD HIS DECISION TO CONTINUE WORKING IN COMICS AND IN THE ALTERNATIVE VEHICLE OF SELF-PUBLISHING. MANY GREAT COMIC BOOK TALENTS HAVE CHOSEN THE ROUTE OF GREED AND HACKED OUT ARTWORK. CORBEN STAYS TRUE TO HIS UNIQUE VISION.

BEST,

JOHN KELLY
PRINCETON, NJ

THAT'S ABOUT IT FOR THIS ISSUE. YOU CAN LOOK FOR US IN ABOUT NOVEMBER. WE MAY NOT BE THERE, BUT YOU CAN LOOK FOR US. AT LEAST, BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

AND PLANS ARE ALREADY IN THE WORKS FOR 1994. MORE ON THAT NEXT ISSUE.

CREDITS:

DENSAGA 3, FALLING ANGELS, WAS WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

THE RETURN OF THE SORCERER WAS WRITTEN BY CLARK ASHTON SMITH AND ADAPTED, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

MOLA THE MOLE WAS WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA.

Back letters page from *DenSaga* #3. The characters illustrated are Fantagor and Uk, the horror hosts of Corben's stories in *Fantagor*. The figure comes from the introduction of *Fantagor* #1.

NOTES FROM NEVERWHERE

I'M BACK FOLKS! AND I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER. MY WORK IS MUCH SLOWER THAN NORMAL (IF THAT'S POSSIBLE!) BUT I EXPECT TO BE UP TO NORMAL SPEED VERY SOON. MY SINCERE THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO SENT CARDS AND NOTES OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

HERE'S SOME LETTERS:

DEAR CORBENS,

FEEDBACK ON **DENSAGA #3**

INTERESTING COVER. THIS APPEARS TO BE AN OIL PAINTING. DOES RICH DO MUCH OIL PAINTING THESE DAYS? I LIKED THE COVER; I WISH THE WIZARD'S FACE HAD BEEN VISIBLE. OVERALL THIS WAS AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT. CHAPTER 3, **FALLING ANGELS** WAS QUITE GOOD. I LIKED HOW RICH CONTRASTED THE OVERALL "WHITENESS" OF THE CLOTHES, SCENES AND SETTINGS WITH THE OBVIOUS EVIL AND TREACHERY RUNNING THROUGHOUT THE COLONY OF ANGELS. CORBEN EFFECTIVELY CREATED AN OTHER WORLDLY FEELING IN THIS STORY, AND, SOMEHOW, ALL THE WHITE CLOTHES AND SETTINGS CREATED AN UNSETTLING FEELING. VERY SUBTLE WORK THERE; AN UNUSUAL STORY. LOOKING FORWARD TO CHAPTER 4 (AND ALSO WHAT'S COMING IN '94). FOR ME THE OVERALL HIGHLIGHT OF THE THIRD ISSUE WOULD HAVE TO BE CORBEN'S MASTERFUL ADAPTION OF ASHTON SMITH'S, **THE RETURN OF THE SORCERER.** WOW, THIS STORY HIT LIKE A PUNCH. THE HORROR LEFT ME REELING. FROM THE OPENING SPLASH, OUTSTANDING IN EVERY DETAIL, TO THE GUT WRENCHING AND REALLY SCARY AND HORRIFIC ENDING, THERE WAS NO LET UP. CORBEN REALLY SEEMED TO BE INSPIRED BY THIS STORY AND THE END PRODUCT SHOWS THIS. IT RECALLS THE GLORY DAYS OF WARREN. THE PAGE OF THE LIMBS MOVING DOWN THE HALL, AND THE ENSUING DRAMA AND TENSION, COMES TO A JOLTING CLIMAX. AN EXCELLENT PIECE OF WORK HERE. CORBEN SHOULD DO MORE ADAPTIONS OF WORKS LIKE THESE, BOTH HORROR AND SCI-FI, BY NAME AUTHORS. CORBEN HAS A GOOD KNACK FOR DOING SHORT STORIES. HOPEFULLY HE'LL DO MORE OF THESE. IN ANY EVENT, A GOOD ISSUE. KEEP 'EM COMING!

BEST,

JOHN KELLY
PRINCETON, NJ

DEAR CORBENS

DENSAGA #3 WAS QUITE NICE AND THE ART WAS WONDERFUL AS USUAL. HOWEVER, I FEEL THAT THE WRITING AND THE DIALOGUE IN THIS ISSUE WERE JUST OKAY. I SUPPOSE THAT THE DIALOGUE SEEMED SOMEWHAT ARTIFICIAL AND THE STORY IN GENERAL JUST SEEMED TO DRAG. **RETURN OF THE SORCERER** LIKEWISE DID NOT SEEM TOO APPEALING EITHER. IT LOOKED LIKE JUST ANOTHER BLOOD/SPLATTER STORY. IN CONTRAST **VAULTS OF YOH VOMBIS** LOOKED MUCH BETTER. I WILL SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE ART IN BOTH DEN AND SORCERER IS FANTASTIC AS TO **MOLA THE MOLE.** NOW THAT WAS EXCELLENT. IT WAS REALLY ENTERTAINING AND YES IT DID LOOK BETTER HERE THAN IT DID IN **HEAVY METAL.** BY THE WAY, WHAT DOES THAT WALL INSCRIPTION ON PAGE 2, ROW 3, PANEL 2 MEAN? THE CHARACTERS ON THE INSCRIPTION SURE LOOK FAMILIAR.

NOW FINALLY, I HAVE A VERY ORIGINAL AND FAIL-PROOF SOLUTION CONCERNING THE PUBLISHING PROBLEMS OF FANTAGOR PRESS. IN THE NEXT ISSUE, WHY NOT HAVE A POLYBAGGED (WITH TRADING CARD) ISSUE WITH A CHROMIUM DIE-CUT, LASER-ENGRAVED, HOLOGRAPHIC, FOIL-STAMPED, GOLD-FOILED, SILVER-FOILED, PLATINUM-FOILED, POP-UP, GLOW-IN-THE-DARK COVER? NOW IS THAT A GREAT IDEA OR WHAT!!!

SINCERELY,

BRET PEEPLES
LAS VEGAS, NV

THE WALL RELIEF IN BOG'S CAVE IS FAMILIAR BECAUSE THE SAME IMAGE WAS USED AS A "BUMP MAP" ON THE COLUMN RENDERED IN A 3-D PROGRAM AND USED ON THE *DEN 5, ELEMENTS* COVER.

MR CORBEN -

HI! JUST A NOTE TO LET YOU KNOW HOW HAPPY AND EXCITED I AM ABOUT THE NEWS OF A RICHARD CORBEN CARD SET!! I'VE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS. I REMEMBER ABOUT A YEAR AGO I SPOKE WITH YOU ON THE PHONE AND I ASKED ABOUT A CARD SET. YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU DID NOT THINK YOU WOULD BE HAVING ONE (HOW DEPRESSING) BUT NOW WE ARE!!

WELL, MY COLLECTION OF YOUR WORK CONTINUES TO GROW. I RECENTLY PICKED UP A FEW MORE OLD UNDERGROUNDS. THE RAY BRADBURY COMIC (CORBEN DINOSAURS!) **AIR BRUSH ACTION** JUNE ISSUE (WONDERFUL), THE **HEAVY METAL** ANNIVERSARY ISSUE AND, OF COURSE, **DENSAGA** (STUNNING ART WORK AND COLORS).

SINCERELY,

MIKE HUGHES
BOSSIER CITY, LA

RICHARD & DONA,

CONGRATULATIONS ON ANOTHER FINE **DENSAGA** STORY. THE ART, AS ALWAYS, WAS SUPERB. WHO CARES IF YOU ARE A LITTLE LATE COMING OUT. YOU'RE BOOKS ARE ALWAYS TOP QUALITY. THE ONLY THING IN YOUR BOOK I DON'T CARE MUCH FOR IS THE BACKUP STORIES (ONLY SOME. NOT ALL). I DON'T CARE FOR HORROR STORIES THAT MUCH. ANYWAY, YOUR CREATIVITY SEEMS BOUNDLESS AND YOUR ARTWORK AND STORYTELLING ARE ALWAYS GREAT. I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS.

1. I WAS WONDERING WHO INFLUENCED YOU IN YOUR EARLY YEARS?

2. DO YOU EVER GET ANGRY OR APPROVING LETTERS FROM FEMALE READERS (IF ANY) OF YOUR WORK?

3. DOES DONA EVER LOOK AT ANY OF YOUR WORK AND SAY "YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR RICHARD!"?

4. WILL YOU EVER HAVE ANY FOIL ENHANCED, DIE CUT, HOLOGRAPHIC COVERS ON ANY OF YOUR DEN BOOKS? (JUST KIDDING)

I THINK MOST OF THE COMIC INDUSTRY HAS JUST BECOME A MONEY MAKING MACHINE. I THINK IT'S GREAT THAT YOU ARE

LETTERS CONTINUED ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER

DENSAGA 4. DENSAGA IS PUBLISHED ROUGHLY QUARTERLY BY **FANTAGOR PRESS**, P.O. BOX 8632, KANSAS CITY, MO 64114, 816-942-7805. **HEAVENLY HOLOCAUST** IS COPYRIGHT © 1994 BY RICHARD CORBEN. **LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL** IS COPYRIGHT © 1994 BY RICHARD CORBEN. THE ENTIRE CONTENTS IS COPYRIGHT © 1994 BY RICHARD CORBEN. ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN NAMES, CHARACTERS, PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IN THIS MAGAZINE AND THOSE OF ANY REAL PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IS COINCIDENTAL. ANY REPRODUCTION OF THIS MATERIAL WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR IS FORBIDDEN. PRINTED IN CANADA.

Front letters page from *DenSaga* #4

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM THE INSIDE FRONT COVER

MAKING THE BOOKS YOU WANT TO MAKE AND GIVING GOOD SOLID ENTERTAINMENT FOR YOUR READERS. KEEP GROWING AND CREATING.

SINCERELY,

TRACY HENSLEY
BRISTOL, TN

ANSWERS:

1. EARLY INFLUENCES INCLUDE THE EC ARTISTS, WALLY WOOD, JACK DAVIS, GRAHAM INGLES, JOHN SEVERIN AND THE GREAT PAINTER ILLUSTRATOR, MAXFIELD PARRISH.

2. NONE COME TO MIND, BUT SOMETIMES IT S HARD TO DISTINGUISH A WRITERS GENDER FROM THEIR NAME, LIKE ROBIN, LESLIE OR TRACY. SUPERFICIALLY IT MAY SEEM THAT MY ART EXPLOITS AND EXAGGERATES THE FEMALE FORM, BUT CLOSER EXAMINATION WILL SHOW THAT THE MALES ARE TREATED SIMILARLY AND SUCH STYLIZATION IS AN INTEGRAL ASPECT OF MY ART.

3. ALWAYS!

4. I'LL TRY ANYTHING!

DEAR RICHARD,

THERE WAS A STRONG SENSE OF DREAD THROUGHOUT **FALLING ANGELS**. ZEG WAS OBVIOUSLY HIDING SOME NASTY SECRET ABOUT THE "GOINGS-ON" IN HEAVEN (I WOULD HAVE NEVER GUESSED IT WAS CANNIBALISM) ONLY THE JOY OF INNOCENCE IN THE CHILDREN BROKE THE SOMBER MOOD. I THINK YOU REALLY CAPTURED THE BEAUTY OF CHILDHOOD IN THEIR WORDS AND GESTURES. I'M GUESSING HERE. BUT IS LITTLE DAVID THE BABY FROM THE LAST SURVIVING EGG FROM KIL AND MAL'S FAILED COLONY? I HOPE ZEG'S DRUGS DON'T HAVE ANY LASTING EFFECTS ON PUCCA S MIND. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LOSE THE PUCCA OF OLD WHO WAS STARTING TO DEVELOP A ZEST FOR LIFE AFTER HER LIBERATION IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE.**

AS ALWAYS, THE ART AND COLORING WERE GREAT. MAL'S MUSCULARITY SHOTS WERE NOTHING SHORT OF PHENOMENAL AND I REALLY ENJOYED THE FULL RANGE OF DRAMATIC LIGHTING EFFECTS IN THE STORY. OF COURSE, AT THIS STAGE DEN'S TRUE ORIGIN IS AS CONFUSING AS EVER; BUT, IT'S A FUN KIND OF CONFUSION AND I CAN'T WAIT TO FINISH THE REST OF THIS RIDE.

YOUR ADAPTATION OF CLARK ASHTON SMITH'S **THE RETURN OF THE SORCERER** WAS JUST PLAIN CREEPY. BRAVO ON THE ILLUSTRATED STORYTELLING THE GESTURES YOU CHOSE FOR THE SEVERED APPENDAGES REALLY LOOKED ANIMATED I SEE THE COMPUTER ONCE AGAIN PAID FOR ITSELF AS LESLIE DASHED FROM THE HOUSE IN HORROR (HE DID, HOWEVER, FORGET TO TURN OFF THE LIGHT BEFORE HE LEFT).

YOUR REPRODUCTION OF **MOLA THE MOLE** WAS MUCH BETTER ALTHOUGH I ENJOYED IT IN BOTH PUBLICATIONS I LOVED THE GIBBERISH (OR IS THAT JABBERISH) SHE SPOKE; IT WAS SIMILAR TO THE LANGUAGE OUR LADIES OF THE SISTERHOOD SPOKE FROM **THE BODYSSEY** THE STORY WAS ALSO A MUCH NEEDED COMEDIC BREAK FROM THE DARK MACABRE MOOD OF THE OTHER TWO STORIES.

I ALSO ENJOYED YOUR INTERVIEW IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF **AIRBRUSH ACTION.** IT WAS VERY INSIGHTFUL BUT I WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT YOU FAILED TO MENTION YOUR GREATEST WORK TO DATE, **DENSAGA**. AND BEFORE **DENSAGA** ENDS, I WOULD ALSO LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 90 PIECE TRADING CARD SET

UNTIL NEXT TIME, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

MY BEST,

PHILLIP MACK
CHARLOTTE, NC

WELL, I GUESS YOU'RE GLAD EVERYTHING IS EXPLAINED NOW-- ER-. AT LEAST YOU KNOW THERE WILL BE ONE MORE DEN ADVENTURE IN THE FUTURE.

BUT, BEFORE THAT, THERE WILL BE "SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT" TO QUOTE THE PYTHONS. AMAZONS BELOW, THE TENTATIVE TITLE, HINTS AT THE SUBTERRANEAN FANTASY ADVENTURE. I WAS GOING TO DO A PREVIEW PAGE BUT SINCE THIS ISSUE IS SO LATE ALREADY I DECIDED TO FORGO THAT.

I'M GLAD YOU MENTIONED THE RICHARD CORBEN TRADING CARDS. AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, THE SET IS OUT ON THE MARKET AND WE HAVE A FEW BOXED SETS TO MAIL ORDER. BY BOX ONLY.

RICHARD CORBEN COLLECTOR CARDS
BY COMIC IMAGES, 10 CARDS PER PACK, 48 PACKS PER BOX.
LOOK FOR SIX SHOCKING PRISM CARDS. $45 PLUS $5 POSTAGE PER BOX.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST! IF YOU LIKE LIVE ROCK MUSIC, CHECK OUT PHANTASMAGORIA IN KANSAS CITY AND MANHATTAN (KANSAS) BARS AND CLUBS. MY FAVORITE COLORIST IS THEIR DRUMMER.

WATCH FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS OF OUR NEXT SERIES AND WE'VE GOT SEVERAL COLLECTED EDITIONS IN THE PLANNING STAGES INCLUDING:

NEW TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS WITH JAN STRNAD
MUTANT WORLD TOM OF MUTANT WORLD WITH JAN
ODDS AND ENDS A 300 PAGE COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES WITH MANY UNDERGROUND STRIPS.
ART BOOK- VOL 2

CREDITS:

DENSAGA 4, HEAVENLY HOLOCAUST AND LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL BY RICHARD CORBEN, COLORED BY RICHARD AND BETH CORBEN.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA.

Back letters page from *DenSaga* #4.

Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.

While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill Dubay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

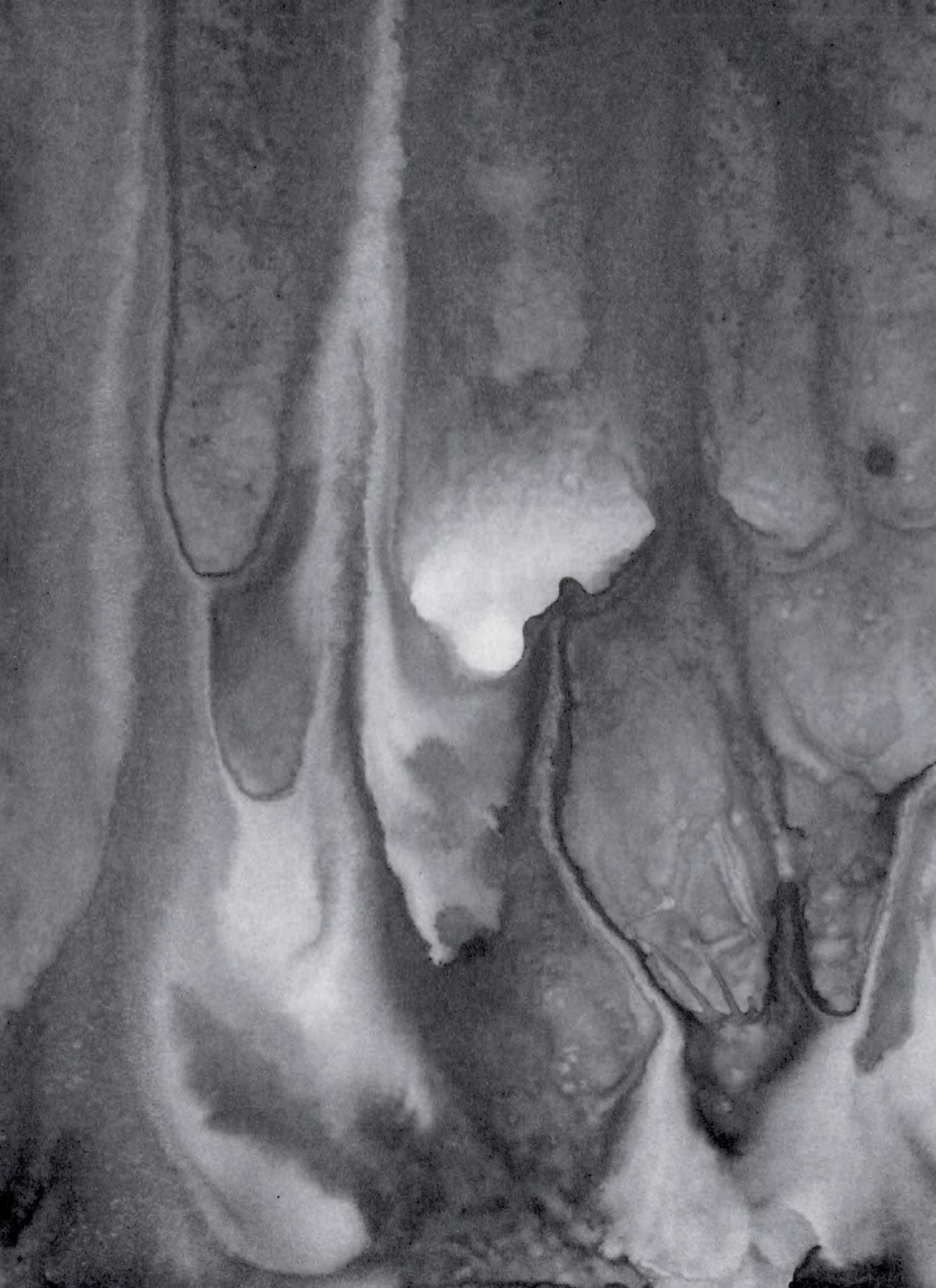
The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and is the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.



RICHARD CORBEN'S MASTERPIECE AT LAST BACK IN PRINT AFTER DECADES!

Well-known for his legendary fantasy comics published by Fantagor Press, Heavy Metal, and others, Richard Corben is considered a master in his field. His work has achieved international acclaim, earning him the most prestigious awards in the comics medium, including the Grand Prix at Angoulême, and induction into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame. In addition, Corben has been honored with the Spectrum Grand Master Award, the highest recognition for a fantasy illustrator.

An amnesic Den encounters an unexpected woman from his past. Sienna is a psychic that takes Den on a memory journey starting at birth, where he will meet old friends and future enemies and get closer to understanding his journey. This last volume of Den connects all four previous parts of the story and takes Den on perhaps his wildest adventure on the floating Island of Heaven, where an idyllic existence hides a horrifying secret.

Den Volume 5: The Price of Memories is the next book in a series of deluxe graphic novels from renowned creator Richard Corben's library to be published by Dark Horse Comics. This special edition collects the fifth volume of the long out-of-print *Den*, and also features bonus material, art pages restored by long-time Corben collaborator José Villarrubia, a new epilogue by Villarrubia, new letters by Nate Piekos of Blambot, and an introduction by Christos Gage all presented in a gorgeous hardcover with a dust jacket.

"I learned that's who Richard Corben was: an incredibly nice genius, quiet and unassuming despite having the powers of a god."
–CHRISTOS GAGE

DARK HORSE BOOKS

FANTAGOR PRESS

MAGIC MAN

DCP